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NUMBER 94

FIRST THINGS

ROBERT H. BORK

Thomas More for Our Season

JOHN J. PIDERIT

*The University at
the Heart of the Church*

ANDREW J. BACEVICH

The World According to Clinton

RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS

Clinton & the American Character

ALISTER McGRATH

Calvin and the Christian Calling

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Ann White on The First Modern Woman • Preston Jones on

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—Chuck Colson

FIRST THINGS

JUNE/JULY 1999 • Number 94

CORRESPONDENCE	2	Robin Darling Young replies to Thomas C. Oden and other critics regarding the <i>Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture</i> ; an exchange on faith and knowledge in Thomas Aquinas
THIS TIME	8	<i>James Nuechterlein</i> Gays, Lesbians, and Lutherans
OPINION	10	<i>Ann White</i> The First Modern Woman
	12	<i>Preston Jones</i> Quebec After Catholicism
	14	<i>Wesley J. Smith</i> Suicide Pays
ARTICLES	17	<i>Robert H. Bork</i> Thomas More for Our Season
	22	<i>John J. Piderit</i> The University at the Heart of the Church
	26	<i>Andrew J. Bacevich</i> The World According to Clinton
	31	<i>Alister McGrath</i> Calvin and the Christian Calling
REPORT	36	<i>Richard Grenier</i> Letter from Budapest
BOOKS	41	
		<i>Brian C. Anderson</i> The Case for Conservatism by John Kekes
		<i>Michael J. Behe</i> The Fifth Miracle by Paul Davies
		<i>Gilbert Meilaender</i> The Last Word by Thomas Nagel
		<i>Gary A. Anderson</i> The Hidden Book in the Bible by Richard Elliott Friedman
		<i>Elizabeth Powers</i> After Heaven by Robert Wuthnow and Shopping for Faith by Richard Cimino and Don Lattin
		<i>Philip Zaleski</i> Daniel Defoe by Richard West; . . . and Briefly Noted
THE PUBLIC SQUARE	63	A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life
		<i>Richard John Neuhaus</i>
		This Month: Bill Clinton and the American Character, etc.
		Poetry by <i>Lawrence Dugan</i> (9), <i>T. Kretz</i> (16, 35), <i>Samn Stockwell</i> (30), <i>Atar Hadari</i> (39)

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Fighting About the Fathers

If asked to list current Roman Catholic patristic scholars with whom I have the deepest affinities and the highest respect, surely Robin Darling Young of Catholic University of America would be on that list and near its top. I have increased my respect for her over the many dialogues in which we have shared over the years. It seems ironic, therefore, that the first critical review of the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (ACCS)* would come from Professor Young. As in the knotty insider struggles between Jerome and Augustine, later between Whitefield and Wesley, and more recently between Brunner and Barth, it seems that those with whom we stand in closest proximity as theological partners are often our strongest critics. This is why I wish to take most seriously a wide range of issues raised by Prof. Young, and answer them respectfully (the longer response to this review can be found on the ACCS website: www.ancientchristian.com).

Far from a "collapse of 'classical Christian' theology" that Young imagines, there is around the world an emerging ecumenical recovery of classic Christian teaching grounded anew in the history of ancient exegesis. This renewal is rediscovering that the texts of orthodoxy are multicontextual due to the Great Commission, and that their polyvalency is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit so as to put bounds on interpretations unfitting to the canonical text. This is the post-critical moment in which we exist now ecumenically. Since the 1970s I have been describing this post-critical, postmodern orthodoxy as a movement profoundly shaping evangelical theology today, which itself is being proximately reshaped in gradually growing dialogue with Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholic magisterial teach-

ing. Accordingly we specifically insist that the ACCS is "not opposing historical-critical inquiry." "We invite it and encourage it," and only hope that it becomes more germanely critical.

While the Drew University-ACCS project is wildly charged with concocting a single mind of the fathers, Prof. Young has actually concocted a Drew-ACCS project that does not exist, one that supposedly admits evidence of patristic writings only when they fit into some imagined doctrinal concurrence. She imposes upon this vast array of texts a simplistic view of the ACCS that assumes no disagreements and no variety. On the contrary, our central purpose is to put on display that rich and complex pattern of ecumenical varieties of interpretation. We have selected over two thousand patristic texts on Romans and over one thousand on Mark. Any reader of these volumes can easily see that many of the arguments of writers as different as Augustine and Pelagius, Origen and Jerome, Tertullian and Ephraem stand in dialectical tension within ecumenical boundaries; in many cases, they overtly conflict. Does the ACCS pretend to present "a univocal patristic interpretation of the Bible that never existed"? That is contrary not only to our intent but to the vast variety of textual selections that are made newly accessible, mostly in fresh translation.

When concord occurs among patristic interpreters, is it only accidental or "occasional"? That would be to deny the unifying work of the Holy Spirit in the Church as constantly asserted by the patristic exegeses themselves (see Mark 9:38-41, Romans 12:1-8). When we speak of consensual exegesis, we are saying only that we are not focused on constantly quoting the heretical views of Valentinus or Marcion or the Gnostics or the Arians. If we did this it would delegitimize our proj-

ect among the many Orthodox and Roman Catholic readers we hope to attract.

No other patristic inquiry has yet set out systematically to use computer technology to locate raw references in Greek and Latin texts to all canonical scripture texts and the Apocrypha using Boolean search techniques. There is, to my knowledge, no similar effort in the planning stage anywhere else. The group with which Prof. Young is working, which has discontinued cooperation with the ACCS, is highly averse to using computer searches to locate verse references, which is one of the major reasons they insisted on going their own way despite our many invitations to bring their efforts into harmony with ours. Our focus methodologically is upon making digital searches into the vast database of Latin and Greek texts that refer to a particular text, and it is the unique strength of our project. This is what makes our textual base far more varied, ecumenical, and irenic than previous efforts.

We invite the distinguished contributors to *The Church's Bible*, the project with which Prof. Young is associated, and which we hope to soon see in print from Eerdmans, to engage not in an abrasive polemic against their partners in the rediscovery of patristic exegesis, but to join us in a broader search that includes a broader database than twentieth-century stereotypes of a "commentary." The ancient Christian writers themselves break that stereotype. We hope it will not be univocally perpetuated. The ACCS does not regard *The Church's Bible* as "a rival," as Prof. Young suggests, but as a companionable attempt to do something very different from the purpose of ACCS: to focus only on those scripture texts that have a substantial history of line-by-line patristic commentaries.

The ACCS consistently presents itself as post-critical, not anti-critical. One wonders how Prof. Young could have missed the fact that the project quotes Pelagius and Origen and Tertullian frequently,

aware of their tenuousness within the tradition of orthodoxy. How could she have missed the fact that there are broad varieties of interpretation in each particular pericope offered, and no predisposing attempt whatever to press them into a single-minded mold? Would a careful reader erroneously assert that "existing translations were used in most cases"? When the reasons why Mark was chosen as the leading volume were so clearly stated, how could she have ignored them? It is hard not to derive the impression that she may have read tendentiously, or perhaps only a few snippets of selections to confirm her initial judgments that the project is not ecumenical, not scholarly, not realistic, and not post-critical. (Incidentally, the number of volumes is twenty-seven, not twenty-five.)

Oddly enough, when Prof. Young states her own vision of the legitimate authority of the fathers, she repeats virtually the same points made in Christopher Hall's book, and in almost the same words. We assert no other authority for the fathers than Prof. Young asserts when she speaks of "their witness to the early apostolic tradition and their proximity, therefore, to the person of Jesus, [and of] the continuity between their exegesis and that of the New Testament authors."

Why did not the profundity of patristic exegesis itself convince her that Mark remains a significant theological contributor rather than a writer "not distinguished in theological insight"? If Mark's theology is faulty, then the rest of the New Testament memory of God's saving action in Jesus Christ is seriously put into question. The premise that Mark is not worthy of comment by the ancient Christian writers is belied by the texts actually presented. We chose Mark as a challenge to demonstrate how even a book with virtually no formal commentary tradition has a diverse array of comments written about each of its narratives in the form of homilies, letters, poetry, prayers, and theo-

logical essays. Those who wish to publish a patristic commentary with different premises are invited to do so, and we welcome this. But we are pledged to remain faithful to our original purpose, which is stated clearly: "The original and continuing ACCS vision of the task has been to use newly available computer search technology to look for *all references in all types of patristic literature—letters, sermons, hymns, doctrinal writings*, as well as specifically exegetical works, eschewing the much easier procedure of working more intensively with fewer texts or preferring complete printed texts to extensive digital searches."

Is the Drew University-ACCS project anti-critical? For my part, I can only reaffirm what I have written previously: "It is unwise to reject prematurely historical method in defense of faith, even where historical method has been grossly abused. . . . Historical method must be better protected from abuse and extended to include forms of inquiry able to take seriously the assumptions of pre- and postmodern Jewish and Christian orthodoxy. Post-critical Christology need not imply a disavowal of historical-critical study."

Prof. Young's central complaint is more about the conception of the series than the outcome. She does not cite a single deficit in patristic exegesis among our selections, only in our packaging and delivering of the selections. Her concern is directed not against the substance of the exegetical arguments, but against the very idea of collecting comments in chains (catenae) from a broad variety of patristic sources within the arena of classic Christian teaching on a single passage of Scripture. She apparently wishes that we had written an entirely different series.

One can only wonder what predisposition might have caused Young to jump to the premature conclusion that the Drew University-ACCS project has used existing translations "in most cases"? A huge proportion of Gerald Bray's

Romans was translated by Bray himself. In the edition of Galatians, Ephesians, and Philippians edited by Mark Edwards of Oxford, just now being published, virtually everything in Greek and Latin has been translated by Edwards himself. Our promise in the series is that we will use existing translations only when they are adequate. In most cases we have found them inadequate, often archaic, and in need of either de-archaizing or complete retranslating.

One who characterizes a fellow scholar as nostalgic has the burden of proof to show how the writing is sentimentally bent toward idealizing the past. There is no effort made by Prof. Young to demonstrate this, only to charge it. The *ACCS* composite texts are analogous to the talmudic writers only in the modest, specific sense that we have carefully stated: "Christians from the late patristic age through

the medieval period had documents analogous to the Jewish Talmud and Midrash."

The Drew-*ACCS* project is not addressed primarily to an evangelical audience, as Prof. Young suggests. If that were the case we would hardly think of including the Apocrypha in our series. Prof. Young seems almost entirely unaware of the remarkable renaissance of patristic studies today among evangelicals the world over. Primary evidence for this is the fact that it is not a Roman Catholic or Orthodox press that has taken the risk of publishing these patristic collections but InterVarsity Press and Eerdmans. But that does not indicate that they are intended solely for a Protestant audience. The Roman Catholic audience is at least as hungry as the Protestant audience for these varied efforts.

When I wrote that "we were duly forewarned by some that this volume on Mark probably could or should not be attempted," I did not mention that Prof. Young was one of those who offered such a caveat. Given the warm reception from pastors and lay readers internationally, and the prospective translation of the entire series into the languages of more than half the world's population, I now feel justified in my earlier statement that "this volume is a demonstration that Mark has an ample history of commentary to be presented in the form and tradition of a catena."

Thomas C. Oden
Drew University
Madison, NJ

In her review of the first two volumes of the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (ACCS)* series plus Christopher Hall's general introduction to the series, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers*, Robin Darling Young focuses almost exclusively on Hall's book, charging that his portrait of the Church fathers is seriously flawed through the "intellectual and spiritual vice of nostalgia." According to Professor Young this so-called vice stems from "the delusion

that a former age, usually the age of primitive Christianity, was far superior to all subsequent ones, perhaps most especially the one now experienced." Those afflicted with the above delusion are, claims Prof. Young, likely to "succumb to the illusion that the fathers of the Church spoke with one voice or that they should have the last word." Thus she concludes that "the overarching problem with the *ACCS*, a problem probably not solely attaching to that series, is that it seeks a univocal patristic interpretation of the Bible that never existed."

There is an overarching problem with this line of criticism, however: the *ACCS* shows no indications whatsoever of seeking any such mythical univocal patristic interpretation. Prof. Young has, unfortunately, formed her impressions from Hall's introductory book rather than from the published commentaries (on Mark and Romans) themselves. This is not to say that interpretive consensus over particular texts, where it occurs, is not evident from the selections. However, the editors have also made a point of noting significant disagreements in the overviews to the various pericopes (passages). To quote from Gerald Bray's introduction to Romans: "Each group of verses is preceded by a short overview that gives the reader some idea of what the following discussion is about. Where there are notable differences of opinion among the fathers or where one of them has presented a particularly significant argument, this is also noted."

Interpretive differences between the fathers are made clearly evident, and are often highlighted in the overview discussions. Had Prof. Young paid more attention to the actual commentaries she was reviewing (instead of focusing her attention on Hall's introductory book) this would have been evident to her.

A second major charge that Prof. Young levels against Hall's portrait of patristic exegesis (and, given her conflation of his book with the *ACCS* series, by implication against the series itself) is that it is combat-



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ive. She cites this feature as evidence that Hall's picture is "wrongheaded," but since when is combativeness itself evidence of wrongheadedness? I would hate to see the implications of that thesis drawn out and applied by those holding editorial powers! The specific evidence of Hall's combativeness that Prof. Young cites is that he attacks modern biblical criticism and modern Western thought generally. Personally I find Hall's points against both of the above to be cogent and well argued. Prof. Young is, of course, entitled to disagree; however, if she wants to make a substantive point against Hall she needs to show where and how Hall's critical comments are misguided. This she has failed to do; she has not even made the attempt.

Paul A. Sauer
Lindenhurst, NY

Translators of the Church fathers are the most wretched of mortals. They devote many years of perpetual study to acquiring the liberal arts in order to be able to fill out the footnotes of their translations with obscure references no one is ever going to read. They lose the best part of their existence in unceasing labor, memorization, and mental anguish. They torment themselves for weeks in painstaking research on an arcane text, trying to explain a confusing reading with plausible conjectures, only to find that their efforts have been completely wasted, since the reading was faulty to begin with. They endeavor to clear the field of rocks, boulders, and immovable stumps, so that English readers, who will never know how long the translator racked his brain to make that field smooth, can run freely and without obstacles. Their only reward is ill health, failing eyesight, white hair, premature senility, back pain, stooped posture, gaunt figures, pale faces, and bloodshot eyes. What does it matter when men and women of this sort die, since they can't properly be said ever to have lived?

They devote their best efforts to restoring the monuments of ancient

and true literature, a task of incomparable difficulty and supreme merit, hoping to see renewal come to the Church as the hearts of their readers are set on fire by the fathers' (consensual) faith and love for God. Their translations are published, and FIRST THINGS' book reviewer tears their whole program to pieces, accusing them of combative idealism with a vengeance, of being refuge seekers, disciples of Schleiermacher, fantasizers, framers of a project of doubtful value, men gripped by the vice of nostalgia, and deluded absolutists.

Better to be deluded in the arms of the ancients than sane in the company of postmodernists.

(The Rev.) Tom Scheck
Evangelical Free Church
Alma, NE

I can't help speaking in defense of Thomas C. Oden and Christopher A. Hall in their grand *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (ACCS). Far from being the nostalgic and idealistic project of Robin Darling Young's censorious review, these commentaries reveal the variegated coloring of Christian teaching by the Church fathers. The commentary on Romans shows the many positions taken on the contribution of human free will in justification, the attempts to explain away predestination, and the varying opinions about how natural law interacts with the Mosaic law. Modern commentaries are largely arid and pseudoscientific; the ACCS, bringing to us the interpretation of Holy Scripture at its initial budding, is illuminating and practical. Modern biblical scholarship, like modern culture, is obsessed with form; the fathers took their bets on the substance of the words. They, like us, did not always agree. Perhaps by studying the Church fathers we can cut through the recycled wisdom of twenty centuries and gain spiritual insight into our own differences.

(The Rev.) Jerome Deister
Immanuel Lutheran Church—
Netawaka, KS
Trinity Lutheran Church—
Holton, KS

Robin Darling Young raises a number of important and interesting issues related to the Drew University-*Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* (ACCS) and my book, *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers*. However, I was surprised and amused to find my ideas the center of attention in Professor Young's essay. My understanding of patristic interpretation and modern biblical criticism, Prof. Young avers, is "combative." Perhaps even worse, I manifest "the intellectual and spiritual vice of nostalgia." I have fallen prey, Prof. Young believes, to the "illusion that the fathers of the Church spoke with one voice or that they should have the last word, a nostalgic delusion." As the review continues my sins expand. Prof. Young appears particularly concerned that I succumb to the temptation "to concoct a single mind of the fathers," a vice that apparently ripples through my book.

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What is one to do?

Perhaps the best course to follow is to direct interested readers to the text of *Reading Scripture with the Church Fathers* itself. Do I present the unified, idealized, nostalgic picture of patristic exegesis that Prof. Young portrays? Hardly. Instead, I offer hermeneutical samplers of the eight great doctors of the Church, hopefully allowing fathers such as Basil or Augustine to speak for themselves. In the process the agreement, disagreement, coherence or lack thereof, and occasional quirkiness of patristic exegesis readily present themselves. I have no interest in concocting an artificial unity among the fathers and don't believe the reader will find such in the book. I also devote two chapters to interpretation in Alexandria and Antioch, for the most part offering samples of patristic exegesis and purposely limiting my own comments. Again, exegetical contrasts appear as brightly as comparisons. The reader will struggle, I think, to perceive the nostalgia and idealism in my work that Prof. Young finds so troublesome.

I do confess to the importance, though, of listening well to other texts, ages, and people. I do think the fathers are worth listening to, not because they represent a unified voice on all exegetical and theological questions and issues, but for many of the reasons Prof. Young lists in her essay. As she puts it, patristic authority is grounded in the fathers' "witness to the early apostolic tradition and their proximity, therefore, to the person of Jesus." Additionally, Prof. Young comments, we have "the continuity between their exegesis and that of the New Testament authors." I could not agree more. Indeed, I discuss the continuity between the fathers and New Testament authors at some length, coining the term "hermeneutical proximity" to describe this important relationship. My discussion seems to have slipped Prof. Young's eye. She also mentions the fathers' "participation" in key "ecumenical conciliar decisions," the

"stature" of certain fathers "within the Christian tradition," and "the authority intrinsic to great holiness" as significant reasons to pay heed to patristic exegesis. All are points I develop and which remain strangely absent in Prof. Young's review. Maybe she wasn't paying attention.

In the *ACCS* as well, the initial volume demonstrates the rich variety and complexity of exegesis the fathers often display. I believe, however, that one can discern a fundamental consonance within the diverse exegetical efforts of the fathers. This consonance, dare we say it, might well be linked to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, just as the Spirit has also guided exegesis in other periods of the Church's history, including the modern era. I wonder whether Prof. Young is herself nostalgic for the continued hegemony of a view of the fathers that privileges discontinuity and discord over continuity and consensus.

Christopher A. Hall
Associate Professor of Biblical
and Theological Studies
Eastern College
St. Davids, PA

Robin Darling Young replies:

The hazards of launching a swift fusillade are, first, that the gunner goes deaf; second, that he cannot see through the smoke; third, that he misses his target. If Professor Oden had not been so quick on the draw, he would have noticed what I now repeat as the obvious meaning of my review of the *ACCS* and its accompanying handbook by Christopher A. Hall. Now, in the post-critical moment, for those devoted to a careful and receptive understanding of the Word, there lies an enormous opportunity for regaining its full and complex meanings in our own time.

The historical-critical method, regnant for over a century (half a century for Catholics), has lost its monarchical rule in the scholarly and literate discussion of the meaning of the Bible. There is a new and learned interest in the views of the tradition that developed as commentary on those books. Scholars

now consult and publish views representing the religious communities in which the Bible resided, as distinguished from the parliaments of scholars whose responsibility to a religious community began to slacken already in the thirteenth century with, e.g., Abelard. For instance, James Kugel's recent book *The Bible as It Was* exemplifies an approach that is geared to the public, fully contemporary, and also curious and respectful toward the views of ancient Jewish and Christian interpreters of the Old Testament. Kugel describes the disparate interpretations of these commentators as a kind of "second authorship," and temperately promotes these interpretative traditions. He shows that they have a weighty claim on our attention.

The greatest recent scholar of early Christian exegesis and theology, Henri de Lubac, knew that traditional interpretations did not lend aid to antimodern ideologies; rather, they were a source of hope and *élan*:

Tradition, according to the fathers of the Church, is in fact just the opposite of a burden of the past: it is a vital energy, a propulsive as much as a protective force, acting within an entire community as at the heart of each of the faithful because it is none other than the very Word of God both perpetuating and renewing itself under the action of the Spirit of God. (*The Motherhood of the Church*)

Precisely this force is required for those who love the Church to be able to sustain the effort to understand the Bible in the contemporary situation and to present their always incomplete conclusions "to all nations." But *craft* is also a prerequisite: the prior tasks are numerous and complicated. The first is a thoroughgoing philosophical understanding of the interpretative process, of which a good example can be found in the works of the late Ben F. Meyer (e.g., *Reality and Illu-*

sion in *New Testament Scholarship*). The second is an expert knowledge of the languages of Bible and tradition; the third a knowledge of those traditions themselves; the fourth a levelheaded assessment of the needs of our own contemporary situation. The fifth is a willingness to engage in dialogue with the contemporary world and its clash of minds and voices. The sixth is the whole armor of Christ—those virtues that make the character of the exegete receptive to the truth as he or she apprehends it in the Church and for the world.

Surely Prof. Oden knew that the review of his work was not a deceptive, partisan attack from a representative of another series. Such a sally accomplishes little. Far from being “an abrasive polemic,” my review asks all similar presentations of patristic exegesis to weigh carefully their procedures and goals, not least the series edited by Robert L. Wilken, in which I participate. Since neither series can do more than provide a taste of patristic exegesis, though, it is of no little importance to provide a good taste to the potential reader.

It would be as tiresome to reiterate the inherent difficulties, even stumbling blocks, in the approach of the *ACCS* as it is to read potted attacks on the Enlightenment or to wade through a jumble of unconnected snippets hastily assembled. Both are unhelpful in the present moment, where after the fall of the historical-critical monarch there is an opportunity for those as sagacious as the serpent and as spiritedly realistic as the dove to salvage the good legacy of the monarch and show the way forward.

None of the other respondents—Paul A. Sauer, Tom Scheck, Jerome Deister, or Christopher A. Hall—could reasonably interpret my review of *ACCS* as an attack upon patristic biblical interpretation per se, or upon the reexamination of

that massive, ancient labor. But likewise, none seems ready to appreciate the enormous erudition and philosophical acumen required for Christian thinkers to learn from the fathers and to move beyond them.

Faith and Knowledge

In “Thomas Aquinas: A Doctor for the Ages” (March), Romanus Cessario raises an issue that is central to Christian theology and ethics.

Father Cessario rightly describes Aquinas and his followers, ancient and contemporary, as “metaphysical realists.” Fr. Cessario writes, “The desire to know the truth that God has placed in the human heart will not disappear, nor will the two wings of faith and reason on which the human spirit rises to contemplate this truth.” The problem lies in the term “to know” in the first clause, and in the parallel of “faith and reason” in the second. This makes belief a species of a priori knowledge, which usurps the role of faith.

The Christian is called upon to believe, not to know (John 3:16). (I thought Kierkegaard made this clear through his examination of the situation of Abraham.) The arrogant assurances of “knowing” were at the core of the fratricides between those Christians committed to “revelation,” on the one hand, and those committed to “rational Christianity” on the other, with both sides insistently “knowing” what could only be believed. Both were oblivious to the difficulties born of dubious epistemological certainties. Such certainties constitute a permanent danger for Christians. A “knowing attitude” is a risk to faith.

From this obsession with “knowledge” came everything from the Crusades, the Reformation, and imperialism down to those modern American fundamentalists who

seem bent upon reinstituting the *imperium Christi*.

Gilbert N. M. O. Morris
Professor of the History of
Systems of Thought
George Mason University
Fairfax, Virginia

Romanus Cessario, O.P., replies:

Allow me to refer Professor Morris to my *Christian Faith and the Theological Life* (1997), where I explain in detail Aquinas’ theology of faith and its act, belief. In short, Aquinas rejects the view that every truth of faith can be known after the manner of a probative, philosophical argument (see *Summa Theologiae* IIa-IIae q. 1, art. 5). Demonstration eliminates the need to rely on the word of another. At the same time, Aquinas affirms and passes on the ancient Christian tradition that faith affords a true knowledge of both God and the world that human wisdom or philosophy is unable to attain. To deny that the articles of the creeds instruct about divine truths will not eliminate human conflicts, but rather will lead the Christian believer to that state of anguish-ridden perplexity that Søren Kierkegaard so eloquently illustrates in his writings. By contrast, Aquinas’ outlook is serene. He holds that the person who assents in faith to revealed truth possesses not only a representation of that truth (the proposition or article) but, in a manner appropriate for the wayfarer, Truth itself. Among the blessed in Heaven, this same trusting faith gives way to loving vision. Let me add that Aquinas would have considered Prof. Morris’ appeal for a contentless faith self-refuting. Why? In order to believe, as Prof. Morris himself reminds us, a person would have to know at least that “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

THIS TIME

Gays, Lesbians, and Lutherans

James Nuechterlein

Just when you've talked yourself into thinking it might not be so bad to belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) after all, the church comes out with another study on sex. This time it's from the Division for Outreach (DO), by way of the Gay and Lesbian Outreach Study Team, and it's called, "Congregational Ministry with Gay and Lesbian People." Actually, the DO report isn't really about sex at all, or, more precisely, it doesn't *talk* about sex. The report's authors, like Nice Christians everywhere, think it very bad form to talk about sex when you talk about gays and lesbians. You should talk instead—you should talk *only*—about discrimination, persecution, and being inclusive.

The ELCA's skittishness about sex talk is understandable. It has twice in this decade issued study guides on sexual morality in general, and both times has been badly burned. The first study was so latitudinarian on all forms of sexual relations short of bestiality—as long, of course, as they occurred in (unspecified) "committed relationships"—that the resulting storm of criticism forced its withdrawal. The carefully sanitized rewrite elicited less protest, but was so unforthcoming in its recommendations for behavior that it disappeared into the bureaucratic black hole where most such efforts wind up. Thus the new DO report, duly daunted on matters sexual, talks extensively about gays and lesbians without ever suggesting that those terms denote anything beyond a subcategory of concern about civil rights.

According to an ELCA press release, the DO report recommends the development for congregations of "a resource on welcoming to gay and lesbian people." It does so in response to a 1996 open letter from the church's Conference of Bishops "urging ELCA members to be sensitive to the gifts and needs of gay and lesbian members, and . . . to reach out to all God's people." The report's information on how congregations might become welcoming came from observations and interviews at sixteen ELCA congregations already noted for their welcoming attitude.

"Prospective visitors," the report says, "search for tangible clues to a congregation's openness, hoping

to see visible signs that this congregation will be a 'safe place.'" Such signs include, the press release notes, "warmly greeting visitors before and after worship; including gay and lesbian members in different leadership roles in the congregation; affirming members individually first and then as a family unit; recognizing that hospitality is not judgmental, even if not all members and visitors share the same views; having a reputation outside the congregation as being active in social justice issues; and participating in community gay and lesbian events."

In "welcoming congregations," the report goes on, "lay and clergy leaders often use the words gay and lesbian in sermons, prayers, adult forums, and other congregational settings." In addition, according to the press summary, such congregations "tend to use inclusive language in the worship service and acknowledge gay and lesbian couples as partners in the same way married couples are recognized."

The decision to become a welcoming congregation, the report notes, is not necessarily pain-free. It requires strong leadership as well as extensive dialogue and education, and even then may involve "painful conversations." But the learning process is nonetheless worthwhile. Welcoming congregations not only can learn how "to manage conflict creatively," they may also become aware of people other than gays and lesbians who might not feel comfortable in their midst: "young adults, singles, apartment-dwellers, single parents, and married people whose spouses may not attend church." (It is encouraging to see that the Church, hitherto unconscionably indifferent to their pain, is at last expanding its ministry to apartment-dwellers. But what, one cannot help but ask, of those who live in duplexes?)

The press summary notes, finally, that welcoming congregations often move on to "open discussion of other issues related to gays and lesbians in church life, including the issue of performing blessing ceremonies for gay and lesbian couples and the issue of ordaining gays and lesbians." (The ELCA, as the report does not mention, currently opposes both practices.) All this, presumably, is part of the process whereby welcoming congregations see themselves coming, as the report says, "to a deeper understanding of the gospel."

The evasiveness of the DO report suggests that advocates of homosexuality within the ELCA have learned that in advancing their cause diversionary feints are preferable to frontal assaults. There is nothing in the report that directly engages the moral questions associated with homosexual behavior. Indeed, the report offers the remarkable judgment that "a congregation's decision to make a

public statement of welcoming . . . does not necessarily mean coming to a unified decision about the scriptural and moral issues related to homosexuality." We can just get on with the welcoming, in other words, and worry later about whether what we're welcoming is morally licit.

Some might object to that way of putting the matter. Why define gay and lesbian *people* simply according to their sexual practices? But that is precisely the point. Activist gays and lesbians insist on identifying themselves—and being affirmed in that identification within the Christian community—by exactly those labels that refer to their sexual activities. (The phrase "sexual orientation," we have come to learn, is virtually always meant to include behavior as well as inclination.) There is simply no coherent sense—as gays and lesbians themselves understand the situation—in which we can welcome homosexual people *as such* without welcoming homosexual behavior. On this issue, there can be no bracketing or deferment of moral considerations.

The people who draw up documents like the DO report, we can assume, understand all this, but prefer that it not be brought to general attention. (If that seems uncharitable, consider the alternative

explanation, which is that they cannot think clearly.) They have learned that the majority of ELCA Lutherans do not share their view that homosexual behavior is a matter of moral indifference. What they presently cannot get church members to affirm, they hope at least to get them to tolerate. Alexander Pope long ago described what follows from there: "We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

This is not, of course, all there is to say about this issue. The Church must attempt, as prudently and winsomely as it can, to persuade gays and lesbians of the wisdom—indeed, the self-evident givenness—of Christian teaching on this matter. It will not in all cases succeed. When it does not, the Church must exercise pastoral care that combines moral clarity and precision with the infinite patience and compassion that the gospel mandates. It must make of sexual immorality—of any sort—neither a triviality nor a fixation.

What the Church must never do—and what, sadly, the DO report does—is indulge in willful sentimental evasion and obfuscation. The report once again reminds us that, where moral discernment is required, if you can only say something Nice, it is better to say nothing at all. □

St. Paul to the Berliners

(Romans 11:17)

A photograph of a German slum
in Toland's life of Hitler
Circa 1932: flags from a dozen windows,
Swastikas slightly outnumbering
Hammer and Sickle.
Behind those tenement doors
Are all the answers—everything we need
To analyze the coming rubble,
The endless lines of gray people
In smoking cities and snowy fields.

Wherever

The last shot was fired—in some Berlin
Alley, I guess—every flag on that slum street
Waves for a dead man, cartwheeling swastika
Or crossed golden tools,
Deadly symbols that lured as Baal's
Furnaces lured all Carthage in the days
Of infant sacrifice:
We produce, we can do . . .

You are the wild

Olive branch, St. Paul told the Romans.
Unto Caesar, Berlin replied.

Lawrence Dugan

Opinion

The First Modern Woman

Ann White

Contrary to popular opinion, current American sexual practice began not in the “sexual revolution” of the 1960s but decades earlier, in the youth of our first modern girls, women now in their eighties. The first modern American women grew up in the 1920s and early 1930s, when Americans discovered that women were sexual beings.

Theirs was the first generation to believe that women could do anything. A woman could fly an airplane, like Amelia Earhart. She could drive a taxi, or she could choose a profession—and have a husband and children as well. After women got the vote in 1920, many insisted on the same freedom as men to choose their personal habits, including smoking, drinking, dancing, and wearing provocative bathing suits. The heroine of a 1925 *McCall's* magazine story announced that a flapper's goal was “to live life in one's own way.” A woman now could go anywhere alone—into stores, churches, depots, saloons. And a modern American woman could go anywhere she chose with a man, including to bed.

Historians tell us that emancipated young women of the '20s and '30s had sex only with men they loved; you could go to bed with a man if you loved him enough to want to marry him. Most women longed for such love—“I would rather be loved than respected,” said one—and on the surface they looked “traditional,” linking sex and marriage, keeping a good bit of the old female sexual reserve. But all the while a new idea simmered in their minds: that they were capable of sexual pleasure, entitled to sexual satisfaction, and that the marital sexual relationship would satisfy their deepest needs. Meanwhile, the idea of marriage as a sacred, religious bond seemed outdated.

Let's take a look at how one real woman of the 1930s worked out the new sexual idea. Though our heroine, the “first modern woman,” is anonymous here, she is neither imaginary nor a composite of many women. She is one individual American woman, who was born in 1911 and died in 1992.

This first modern American woman wanted to be more modern than her mother, a quiet woman

who wore modestly printed cotton dresses and followed a weekly routine of household chores: laundering clothes on Mondays, shopping on Wednesdays, baking on Fridays. Her daughter was more sociable. In college, she sang small solo parts in operettas and began to picture herself as a little bit glamorous and to think the staidness of her mother's life a little old-fashioned. “Modern” to her meant glamorous, with a hint of the sexually suggestive. She loved the new Clark Gable movie, *It Happened One Night*, especially the last scene, when the blanket “wall” separating Claudette Colbert's bed from Gable's came down.

After graduation she found a teaching job in another city. She thought about getting her own apartment—many young women did this—but settled instead for a rented room in a widow's house. She told herself that her first-year teacher's salary would not cover an apartment, but in the back of her mind she feared being alone. The young women who did live alone craved the excitement of an independent life, though they did not necessarily want to go through life by themselves. It was one thing to imagine pawning valuables to buy an airplane, as Amelia Earhart had done, quite another to carry through such lonely, demanding career plans. Most of these would-be moderns wanted to feel free, but they wanted to feel secure at the same time. They yearned for excitement, but they wanted a reliable companion with them on the way.

The companion, they thought, would be male. Not for them, however, the sedate kind of courtship they imagined their mothers having conducted in their grandparents' front parlors. They would engage in sexual behavior unknown to their mothers before the wedding night, usually but not always stopping short of sexual intercourse. Sex was in the air—had been in the air since they were children. Sex was in movies and novels and public lectures, in intellectuals' arguments that sexual abstinence harmed women's physical and mental health. These modern young women, self-conscious about their own sexual sophistication, said that they cut their hair and wore short skirts for comfort and convenience. But they knew that hair sculpted close to the head was alluring and that short skirts and sheer silk stockings drew attention to their legs in a far from innocent way. They made up their faces to suggest sensuality: pale powdered skin, colored lips, unnaturally arching eyebrows.

Our heroine found herself attracted to her landlady's handsome and eligible nephew. When he came for dinner one Sunday, she laughed at his jokes and asked him questions about his office supply business. They had frequent weekend dates, which included long, lingering kisses. Would he, she found herself wondering, ask her to marry him? When he

stopped calling her, she told herself that he was a businessman like her father and that she really wanted to marry an intellectual.

She moved back home, where she taught junior high school English and, in her spare time, helped with children's and teenage activities at her Lutheran church. Glamorous the church was not. Once upon a time, the Christian Church pulsed with the kind of excitement our heroine sought. In days of apostles and martyrs, Christians were gallant. In Reformation days, Christians were passionate. On nineteenth-century mission fields, Christians were heroic.

But by 1937, few American Christians understood the content of their faith, let alone defended it passionately. To our heroine and to many of her peers, the church seemed stodgy. In her church work, the first modern American girl saw mostly women and children, since the male leaders ran the church but did not study or teach in it. When she did see men at the formal Sunday service, they were middle-aged and older. Her most glamorous dream, of intellectual conversation with an attractive *young* man, looked unlikely to be fulfilled.

Until that surprising Sunday afternoon, when a man whom she had never seen before showed up to help chaperone a group of teenagers. Her handsome co-chaperone, younger than she by four years, was working as a wholesale tobacco salesman because his family could not afford to send him to college. He wished, however, that he were in college. Very intelligent, he mourned his unused intellectual powers. In his spare time he read Schopenhauer, the pessimistic philosopher who wrote about pain's predominance in human experience. But even while contemplating his psychic pain, he did not ignore our attractive heroine, who, for her part, thought she had found the intellectual of her dreams.

They began seeing each other regularly. Our heroine, who had been in a bar only once with her father, felt a tingle of excitement when the young man took her to a nightclub. They drank whiskey and listened to a local singer's rendition of "Night and Day." Many Saturday evenings they returned to the club, sometimes meeting his friends from the tobacco company. He smoked Chesterfield cigarettes; soon, so did she, feeling quite sophisticated as she tapped her cigarette on the table before lifting it to her lips for him to light.

She found him more pliable than her former boyfriend, who had always kept her guessing. This new man basked in her attention. He told her that the Depression made marriage impossible, speaking of no particular marriage, certainly not his. She ignored the impersonal tone and imagined that he was thinking about marrying her. She wanted to get married. She would soon be twenty-five and feared that marriage might elude her. A teaching career did not excite her despite her talent—she had a sense of

humor that kept students interested through the dullest grammar drills. A teaching career did not seem modern to her, though, and it did not make her feel important. In modern life women were equal to men, and therefore important. Marriage, she believed, would make her both equal and important.

Her mother and her long-skirted nineteenth-century grandmothers had also considered marriage important, but our heroine did so for a different, "modern" reason: she believed that marital sex would bring her personal fulfillment. Intellectuals preached to her generation that women's equality with men required husbands to fulfill their wives sexually. A new era had dawned, wrote sexologist Havelock Ellis, in which sex took on "therapeutic" importance: women should no longer—*would* no longer—be sexually repressed. Sexual fulfillment was their right, the sign of their equality with men.

Our heroine believed she loved the tobacco salesman. He said that he loved her, though usually when he was slightly drunk. Should they sleep together now? He pressed for it; she relented. That is, she told herself she was "relenting" because she loved him so much. Her deepest thoughts were more complex. She now proudly regarded herself as a daring, modern young woman; she also, without quite admitting it to herself, was trying to maneuver the young man into marriage. She didn't worry about his drinking because he never lost control of himself; he just kept talking like an intellectual, gradually becoming sardonic and sad.

Weekend after weekend went by, with nightclubs and sex on Saturday nights, church services on Sunday mornings, and sometimes church activities on Sunday afternoons. On Saturday evenings, our heroine's lover bewailed his lot in life and toasted his self-pity with beer and whiskey. Sunday mornings he seemed cheerful and refreshed, a state that our heroine attributed to sex with her, not to church—salvation came through sex, or so she thought.

One Saturday evening, pretending some nervousness, she told him that she was pregnant. On the inside she was pleased, believing marriage would quickly follow. It did; very quickly. They eloped—glamorously, she thought—as did Claudette Colbert in *It Happened One Night*, when she fled a big church wedding to marry her down-and-out boyfriend. Our heroine told her parents she wanted to spare them the expense of a wedding.

The tobacco salesman had been right when he said that the Depression made marriage impossible. Where could they afford to live on the pittance they were earning? Her parents offered to carve a few rooms of their house into an apartment for the fledgling couple. There, in the bosom of her childhood home, our heroine undertook to enjoy all the sexual pleasures of modern married life—not, however, before telling her new husband in appropriately sur-

prised tones that she was *not* pregnant after all.

Our heroine did not grasp the magnitude of her mistake until a few years later, when her husband, self-pitying as ever, had a brief affair with another woman. Then she decided that her marriage had misfired. The first modern American girl, now a modern American woman with two small children, thought of divorce but stayed married, in part for the children but also because she was still afraid to live alone. Another thirty years and she was still married and still thinking of divorce, regretting her marriage every day. Her husband's drinking no longer seemed sophisticated, especially when, drunken and sardonic, he mocked *her*. The joys of sex and then the sex itself gradually left the marriage. So deeply preoccupied was she with her own disappointment that she spent no emotional energy on her children; she fed and clothed them but never tried to understand them. Rather than fulfilling her, marriage deadened her spirit.

Though she began her sexual career optimistically, our modern American girl ended it in quiet tragedy. Feminists claim that such tragedies occurred because women were not truly equal to men—a broader set of career choices would have kept our heroine from wanting so much to get married. But can we not also admit that exaggerated hopes for sex betrayed her? Early-twentieth-century intellectuals exalted sex as a woman's salvation; their promises have echoed down the century, with hardly a whisper heard about the falseness of such claims. For all its power, sex has saved no woman from her discontents or her fears. It certainly did not save that first modern American woman, our anonymous but real heroine, who died quietly a few years ago. The false promises that marred her life remain virtually uncontested in America's sex-drenched culture.

ANN WHITE is a high school teacher in Washington, D.C.

Quebec After Catholicism

Preston Jones

In July 1997 Quebec City unveiled a bronze statue of Charles de Gaulle outside its walls. Though the \$150,000 price tag might have seemed exorbitant to Canadians whose cash-strapped governments have in recent years been compelled to cut social services, for Quebecois sovereigntists it was a small price to

pay for the assurance that from now to forever the eminent general will preside over the Plains of Abraham, site of a definitive French defeat at the hands of the English in 1759, terrestrial source of perpetual French Canadian humiliation, historical souvenir of all that is wrong with the world.

It is of course fitting that de Gaulle should rule over the Plains, for few events in the history of Quebec's sovereigntist movement can match the long-term influence of his cry "*Vive le Québec libre!*" from the balcony of Montreal's city hall in July 1967 before a crowd of fifty thousand. "Whatever General de Gaulle's ambiguous motives may have been," wrote Canadian historian Ramsay Cook soon after the event, "there can be no doubt that his adventures in 'la nouvelle France' finally brought into focus the nature of the current Canadian crisis."

If de Gaulle's visit to Quebec in 1967 is remembered as having stirred a crisis among Canada's federalists, to Quebec's sovereigntists it stands as a signal event in their collective memory. The liberator of Paris was now their liberator. And even as a "quiet revolution" made radical changes in their own society, de Gaulle seemed to be saying that France was now eager to embrace her distant brood. "France sees you, she hears you, she loves you."

So let us say that Quebec received de Gaulle as something of a savior—in the words of former Quebec premier René Lévesque to the French National Assembly in 1977, de Gaulle's declaration was heard like a prophetic shot around the world. Nineteen years later Premier Jacques Parizeau claimed that the general's four small words lived on "in the life of a people." And in his autobiography, current Quebec premier Lucien Bouchard effuses over the memory of a youthful handshake with de Gaulle in 1959: "He held out his hand. I grasped it eagerly. I couldn't help noting how fine and smooth it was."

Why this hero worship? What was so wrong that led French Canadians to turn to de Gaulle as a sort of Quebecois messiah? As a first step toward an answer, we might observe that from the 1850s until the early 1960s, Quebec's French-speakers believed themselves to be actors in a drama of universal import. "What Christian," asked the influential nineteenth-century French Canadian bishop L. F. R. Laflèche, "believing in the all-wise Providence controlling every event on earth, could fail to be struck by the resemblance between Abraham's behavior when he took possession of the land God promised his descendants, and that of Jacques Cartier as he took possession of this Canadian territory to which . . . the same Providence had guided his footsteps?" It was obvious to Laflèche that French Canadians had, in his terms, a "providential mission"—to be a Catholic light and witness to North America and the world, to stand against liberalism and modernism.

It was in service to that mission that Quebec's reli-

gious and political leaders worked to preserve the French language and culture that had grown up along the St. Lawrence River, not for their own sake, but because those goods were inextricably tied to the Catholic faith to which French Quebecers owed their existence as a people. They believed, correctly as it turns out, that whereas the scattered and outnumbered French-speakers in New England, the Canadian West, and Louisiana were in large measure doomed to assimilation into North America's predominant Protestant culture, Quebecers who remained true to the Catholic faith and the French language and culture in which that faith was expressed could maintain a coherent society. Thus Quebec's premier, the heavy-handed Maurice Duplessis, in 1946: "The province's strength lies in the depth of its religious feeling. . . . [It] must be the citadel of Christian civilization in Canada and even the entire North American continent."

Before Duplessis died in 1959 it seemed that life in Quebec would continue as ever. An article published in the *Journal of Political Economy* in 1960 observed that the nineteenth century had "passed lightly over the French Canadians." Little did anyone know that within the next few years Quebec would undergo a most radical transformation.

In *Appointment in Rome*, his recently published account of the Synod for America in late 1997, Richard John Neuhaus considers, inter alia, the cultural and theological positions taken in recent years by Canada's Catholic bishops. Being "finely attuned" to the preferences and whims of Canada's elite culture, Neuhaus writes, Canada's Catholic bishops seem to be committed to the rule that, above all, one must not give offense. This commandment has been in effect especially in Quebec, where in the 1960s the Catholic Church fell from its status as Quebec's chief purveyor of culture to that of a lowly target of scorn. Neuhaus captures the measure of Quebec's reconstruction, wrought by the convergence of a desire on the part of some elite Quebecers to "catch up" with the modern world and the reforming spirit of Vatican II. "With stunning rapidity, paralleled only by the Netherlands," he writes, "Quebec went from being one of the most religiously observant societies to one of the least observant. Schools, hospitals, and social services were rigorously secularized; priestly vocations evaporated; Mass attendance plummeted; the churches were emptied; and politicians and priests together declared the revolution a success."

Neuhaus is right, though that last point needs nuancing. Throughout the 1960s Quebecois clerics were at the center of the very movement that would soon push them into irrelevancy. Proponents of "keeping up with the times" so as to "effectively engage in dialogue with the culture," they believed that Quebecers who had formerly gone to church out of a sense of mere cultural duty would now go for more

high-minded reasons—the chance to share their spiritual journeys with nonjudgmental sisters and brothers, for example. But no sooner had Quebec's "progressive" priests repudiated one conformity than they fell into line with another, working with the new cultural engineers to produce what is now one of the most militantly anti-Catholic and stultifyingly conformist of Western societies.

It's not that the relationship between church and state in Quebec was not crying out for change. In Neuhaus' words, "everyone agrees that the earlier concubinage between Church and government in Quebec was unhealthy." Indeed, some of Quebec's Catholic bishops had become so dependent on the state's patronage by the late 1950s that Premier Duplessis could say, with some justice, that the bishops ate from his hands. And it is easy to understand how things could have come to that pass: Following the collapse of France's North American empire in 1763 the only real authority that remained in Quebec was the Catholic Church. Were it not for the Church, Quebec's French-speaking community would not have survived. By the 1960s, however, Quebec's clerics had grown accustomed to wielding and acquiescing to political influence, and reform was necessary.

By the 1970s, many within Quebec's Catholic Church were forced to recognize that what they had really signed on to was, so to speak, their own death warrant. "We did not realize how much would be destroyed, or how quickly," Neuhaus records one old priest as saying. "We wanted to liberate [Quebecers] from the oppression of the Church and we ended up liberating them from the Church." Rarely in modern times has well-intentioned but misguided zeal cost so much.

So what filled the cultural space made vacant by the collapse of the Catholic Church in Quebec? A lot of things. Soon after he was elected leader of the Bloc Quebecois, Gille Duceppe reminded the Canadian press that "Before Duplessis died, we'd all go to church and make our sign [of the cross], and a year later we didn't go to Mass any more. So we looked for another set of values, one that was all-enveloping, like the Church." Like many, Duceppe first turned to communism. Then, as Montreal political scientist Denis Moniere has noted, there were those young Quebecers who simply enjoyed their new-found liberty to embrace "the pleasures of immediate consumption" and to shatter "old taboos." But more significant for Moniere and eventually for Duceppe and many others is that in the 1960s Quebecois separatism became a significant political force—just when Quebecers were abandoning their churches en masse. For many, nationalism filled the void created by the Church's collapse in Quebec.

And the way some French Quebecers talk, you'd think that that was a pretty good trade. What's clear, though, is that despite their newfound projects, in

the 1960s a large number of French Quebecers felt a sense of existential rootlessness for the first time.

In 1895 the American expatriate and arch-nationalist Jules-Paul Tardivel opined that “God has planted in the heart of every French Canadian patriot a ‘flower of hope’”; and for all contemporary Quebec’s secularity, one suspects that something of the hopefulness Tardivel detected in the cities and towns along the St. Lawrence somehow lives on. To be sure, Quebec’s sovereigntists no longer embrace the aspiration, pronounced by Tardivel, “that there be established, on the banks of the St. Lawrence, a New France whose mission shall be to continue in this American land the work of Christian civilization.” Rather, they look to the fulfillment of the promise of the Quiet Revolution: a *patrie* of their own. But at the heart of both aspirations is hope—in times past, a hope that righteous endurance could transform the French Canadians’ piece of earth into a city on a hill; in the present, a hope that political independence will somehow wash away existential despair. “We’ll have our country!” Jacques Parizeau told his dejected supporters on the night of the defeat of the October 1995 referendum on sovereignty. “*Vive l’espoir, vive le Québec!*”

Which brings us back to the statue of General de Gaulle outside Quebec City, just a few hundred yards from where Parizeau called on his partisans to keep hope alive—where, despite setbacks and failed referenda, the cry for a free Quebec arises, like incense, night and day. And we recognize that what Quebecois nationalists seek in that graven image is a final answer to the question that has been at the heart of French Canadian public life for some two centuries: What is Quebec for?

Nowadays not very many among Quebec’s dwindling Catholic faithful would want to say, as did their ancestors, that their people constitute a New Israel. They wouldn’t want to say that the Quebecois are a uniquely chosen people. But what they could say is that for all the things Quebecers regret, or think they regret, in their history, the Catholic faith provided their forebears with an answer to the one great question they have always had in common. Whether Quebec’s Catholics will be able to muster up the courage to say such a thing is another matter.

“Ours,” one Quebecois priest told Father Neuhaus, “must be the quiet generation.” But as the standard life expectancy and average age of Quebec’s Catholic clergy converge, one wonders if that ostensibly prudent wariness isn’t really a betrayal. Dead men don’t speak; the number of young men entering the ministry is minimal; churches are closing their doors; religious ignorance continues to skyrocket; Quebec’s suicide rate and other manifestations of social despair make the American condition seem rosy in comparison. All the while, Quebec’s Christian leaders mutter faint platitudes behind closed doors.

PRESTON JONES, a doctoral candidate at the University of Ottawa and fellow of the Pew Program in Religion and American History, is currently finishing a Ph.D. thesis on the Bible in late-nineteenth-century Canadian public life.

Suicide Pays

Wesley J. Smith

It is the unfortunate nature of man that financial imperatives often supersede important moral and ethical principles. We often tolerate or even celebrate inherently unethical and immoral actions as long as they make a buck.

Simply put, mammon has the power to distort moral intuitions. Take the issue of assisted suicide. Opponents of legalization warn that if killing is ever deemed a legitimate medical practice, the ultimate driving force toward hastened death will not be “choice” but money. Yes, legalized assisted suicide would begin primarily as a phenomenon of white, upper-middle-class people—the types who are typically the most supportive of legalization. But when a doctor killing his patient becomes an ordinary affair, assisted suicide could be seen as an easy way to cut medical costs, thereby increasing profits for HMOs while reducing financial burdens on taxpayers who pay for government health care programs and families who care for ill and disabled members.

This paradigm has already formed in Oregon, the only state to legalize assisted suicide, where it is made available by virtually all of the state’s non-Catholic HMOs, one of which limits hospice coverage to a miserly \$1,000. Similarly, assisted suicide is covered as “comfort care” under Oregon’s Medicaid health care rationing scheme, while at the same time, the plan excludes from coverage treatment for life-threatening conditions such as some late-stage cancers and care for low birth-weight babies. That is why many advocates for the poor nationwide, such as the Coalition of Concerned Medical Professionals and organizations that stand up for farm laborers and service workers, now label assisted suicide “death squad medicine” and have begun grassroots organizing against it.

The once strong popular tide favoring assisted suicide may be turning, as witnessed by Michigan’s overwhelming rejection of a legalization initiative last November by 71-29 percent. The American people are slowly awakening to the powerful financial gravitational force that would be created if assisted suicide were legalized, which is why it was so disheartening to see the media (including Richard John

Neuhaus in the February Public Square) readily accept a study in the July 16, 1998 *New England Journal of Medicine* that substantially underestimates the financial impact of legalizing assisted suicide.

The *Journal* study was conducted by a noted assisted suicide opponent, Ezekiel J. Emanuel, M.D., and a noted proponent, Margaret P. Battin, Ph.D. Yet the study is deeply flawed from the beginning. The authors use statistics published by a pro-euthanasia Dutch physician to predict the number of physician-assisted suicides in the United States under universal legalization. The Dutch study claimed that approximately 2.7 percent of the annual 130,000 Dutch deaths are caused by euthanasia or assisted suicide, including about 1,000 people killed by doctors without request or consent. Applying this 2.7 percent figure to United States demographics, the authors estimate that 62,000 Americans would die each year by assisted suicide were it legal throughout the country.

As bad as that is, the 2.7 percent statistic undercounts significantly the number of people in the Netherlands who actually die at their doctors' hands. The Dutch, having been intensely criticized internationally over their euthanasia policies, deliberately underplay the extent to which killing permeates their health care system. One technique they use to undercount euthanasia deaths is to apply an overly restrictive definition of "euthanasia." If a doctor kills a patient with a lethal injection of curare upon request of the patient, it is considered euthanasia. However, if a doctor kills the same patient through a massive overdose of morphine administered with the primary intent that the drug kill the patient rather than control pain, that death is not considered euthanasia. This results in a dramatic undercount of the number of people doctors actually kill in the Netherlands, since far more people die through the intentional overdose method than through lethal injections.

In 1991, the Dutch government published "The Rummelink Report," which disclosed that approximately 8,100 people were killed by physicians in 1990 through massive overdoses of morphine. The Rummelink Report did not include these deaths in its widely reported conclusion that about 3 percent of Dutch deaths were caused by euthanasia or assisted suicide. Include the morphine overdose deaths listed in the Rummelink Report's statistical tables and the percentage jumps to 8.5 percent of 1990 Dutch deaths, nearly *triple* the figure adopted in the Emanuel/Battin study. Even that horrifying figure is probably too conservative. A *British Medical Journal* study published in February found that 59 percent of Dutch assisted suicides and euthanasia killings go unreported. Thus, when Emanuel and Battin predicated their estimate of the number of Americans who would die by assisted suicide on the Dutch statistic of 2.7 percent, they utterly destroyed their study's predictive reliability.

Secondly, the authors predicate their findings on the unrealistic assumption that the people who would "choose" assisted suicide would be those with four weeks or less left to live. Using this time frame, the authors claim that the annual savings from assisted suicide would be approximately \$627 million (based on the statistical undercount as related above) using average Medicare costs for end-of-life care. But this assumption is highly questionable. In the Netherlands, there are many documented cases of assisted suicides and euthanasia for nonterminal conditions, including depression over the death of children, fear of giving in to anorexia, haunted memories of the Holocaust, infants born with birth defects, anguish over skin cancer scars, and asymptomatic HIV infection.

Even a cursory review of the assisted suicides that have been made public in this country reveals that most assisted suicide victims were not within a few weeks of the end of their natural lives. Indeed, 80 percent of Jack Kevorkian's kills weren't even terminally ill, and at least four had no underlying organic disease that could be determined upon autopsy. It is also important to note that coauthor Battin has said elsewhere she believes that legalized assisted suicide could eventually have a wide rather than narrow application, even to nonterminally ill elderly people who want to die so as to avoid burdening their families with the cost of their care. Moreover, she has recently written that "rational suicide" should be permitted, even if as a "self-sacrifice based on altruistic reasons" rather than on avoiding suffering in terminal illness. Thus, to assert that assisted suicide would be narrowly applied is unrealistic. Indeed, the authors admit that if 7 percent of U.S. deaths were caused by assisted suicide—using a still unduly conservative two months to live assumption—the annual estimated cost savings enters the billions.

The authors make another fundamental error by assuming that the level of physician killing in the United States would be roughly equivalent, or perhaps even lower, than that in the Netherlands. That is extremely unlikely considering the crucial differences between the medical systems of the Netherlands and the United States. While there is an indirect financial incentive in favor of euthanasia in the Netherlands as a method of health care cost control, Dutch doctors are essentially employees of the government and so have little direct financial incentive to kill.

The same would not be true in the United States where managed care compensation contracts may base up to 25 or 30 percent of a physician's income directly upon his or her ability to contain costs. Such compensation plans place physicians in a direct financial conflict of interest with their most ill and disabled patients, whose cost of care in some cases comes directly out of the physician's own pocket-

book. Then there is the problem of forty-three million uninsured Americans who often delay medical treatment until they are very sick and then generally receive care from understaffed and overcrowded hospital emergency rooms, where they are often seen not so much as patients but as annoyances. It is thus very likely that assisted suicide deaths would actually constitute a higher percentage of total deaths here than they do in the Netherlands.

A final crucial omission from the Emanuel/Battin study further limits its value: the potential role that personal and family financial issues would play in assisted suicide decision making. The authors do not discuss the issue, they claim, because there are insufficient published studies with which to “quantify these savings.” Yet it is here at the level of the individual that money could play the most crucial role of all in the “choice” for assisted suicide.

Extended illness or disability can devastate family finances. In a society that increasingly discounts the inherent moral worth of the lives of sick and disabled people, failure to “choose” assisted suicide could be perceived as selfish and insensitive to other family financial obligations. (“Gee Grandma, because we have to care for you, Timmy can’t go to college.”) This, in turn, could lead to overwhelming social pressures favoring hastened death—the so-called duty to die already under active discussion in bioethics literature—not to mention the risk of coercion by relatives hungry for inheritance.

Indeed, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, in its 1994 ruling declaring a constitutional right to assisted suicide (which the Supreme Court later overturned), stated that it would be proper for dying and disabled people to take “the economic welfare of their families and loved ones” into consideration when deciding to be killed. Derek Humphry, cofounder of the Hemlock Society, has written recently that avoiding family burdens would be a splendid reason to commit assisted suicide. When the wolf howls, the wise lock their doors.

By adopting faulty statistics, using unduly conservative time-left-to-live estimates, ignoring the pertinent differences between Dutch and American medical practices, and refusing to grapple with financial incentives in assisted suicide decision making at the individual and family level, the Emanuel/Battin study is, in the end, of little empirical value. However, because it carries the imprimatur of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, it has the potential to do great mischief as a basis for complacency about money as one of the driving forces behind the assisted suicide bandwagon.

WESLEY J. SMITH is an attorney for the *International Anti-Euthanasia Task Force* and the author of *Forced Exit: The Slippery Slope from Assisted Suicide to Legalized Murder*. His next book, *Culture of Death: The Destruction of Medical Ethics in America*, will be published next year.

Corinthian Nurse

When I was a child
I talked as adults did,
Thought like an adult,
Acted like one, too,
Obeyed as commanded,
Walked wards I never
Wanted to set foot in,
A subject to serve.

Now that I am a man
I talk as children do,
Think like a child,
Am the sun for earth
to orbit, flaunt a whim
as wind a mote in
the eye while a beam
pins down a patient.

T. Kretz

Thomas More for Our Season

Robert H. Bork

The continuing contemporary interest in Thomas More (1478-1535) is hardly to be accounted for by popular fascination with sixteenth-century English politics or even by admiration for a martyr to a religious cause no longer universally popular. It is more likely that More's memory remains fresh after almost half a millennium because his life casts light on our time. More lived, as we live today, in a time of rapid social and cultural unraveling. The meaning of his life, at least for us, is not so much his worldly success and religious piety, extraordinary as both of these were, but rather the courage and consistency with which he opposed the forces of disintegration.

The culture war of the early sixteenth century was fought over the breaking apart of Christianity, its loss of central authority, and the consequent fragmentation of European civilization. Our war rages about the collapse of traditional virtues across all of the West and the rise of moral indifference and cheerful nihilism. Many parallels between the two eras could be drawn, but a crucial similarity lies in the central role played by law in each. Though More was a profoundly religious man, it should not be forgotten that he was also a preeminent lawyer and judge. The law, quite as much as Catholicism, is crucial to an understanding of the man and the martyr. Law and its institutions were, of course, major forces of cohesion in More's age, and are perhaps the primary symbols in ours of stability and continuity as well as justice. When moral consensus fades, as it did in More's time and does in ours, we turn to law; when law falters, as it must when morality is no longer widely shared, society and culture teeter on the brink of chaos.

ROBERT H. BORK is the John M. Olin Scholar in Legal Studies at the American Enterprise Institute and author of *The Tempting of America: The Political Seduction of the Law* and *Slouching Towards Gomorrah: Modern Liberalism and American Decline*.

That is another way of saying that law cannot be divorced from morality—and, there is reason to think, morality, at least in the long run, cannot be divorced from religion. Law and religion are alike, therefore, as reinforcements of social order. It is a subject for speculation at least, whether either can long remain healthy and self-confident without the other. Each imposes obligations, but each is subject to the therapeutic heresy, softening those obligations to accommodate individual desires. It is a sign of our distemper that Thomas More is today so often regarded as a hero of civil disobedience, a man who refused to obey law with which he was in profound moral disagreement. That is a considerable distortion of the truth, and it was not More's understanding of his motives. For him, in a very real sense, law *was* morality. It is equally true that for More morality was superior to law and was the standard by which law must be judged. If that seems a paradox, I do not think it truly is one.

More, as his biographers make clear, had the utmost respect for authority, hierarchy, and social discipline. He was born into an age when schooling stressed these virtues. Early education, including the study of musical harmony, as Peter Ackroyd informs us, emphasized the paramount importance of order and hierarchy. Then came the study of rhetoric, memorization of simple syllogisms and verbal formulas, by which young students were "made aware of the presence of external authority while at the same time becoming familiarized with the implicit demands of order and stability. . . . Beyond all this, too, was the image of God." These tendencies were confirmed in More's study of the law. "The central and important point," Ackroyd writes, "is that both [religion and law] were conceived to be visible aspects of the same spiritual reality. . . . The attitude More adopted towards the primacy and authority of law governed all his subsequent actions."

Contrast this with today's anarchic popular music

and primary education, embodied at their extremes in rap and the self-esteem movement, which cater to and encourage the natural indiscipline of the young. It should not be surprising that similar manifestations of the disorder appear in adult fields of endeavor, including law and religion. These tendencies were present in More's age as well, as Ackroyd makes clear:

It is of the greatest significance in understanding his [More's] behavior . . . to realize that he wrote about the law in precisely the same way he described the Church. There was, for him, no essential or necessary difference. That is why he understood at once the nature of Martin Luther's heresy, when the German monk spoke of judgment "according to love . . . without any law books." When Luther emphasized the importance of the "free mind," as opposed to the tenets of "the law books and jurists," More recognized instinctively that he was mounting an attack upon the whole medieval polity as constituted by the Catholic Church; when Luther argued that law was written within the heart of man, and that judges should ignore matters of precedent and tradition, he was assaulting the principles by which More's life and career were guided.

More saw Luther's advocacy of lawless law to be at the heart of their culture war. Luther spoke for the individual conscience and so necessarily attacked the authority of precedent and tradition in the law. More's view of law and the duty of judges was quite different. R. W. Chambers quotes him as saying: "If the parties will at my hands call for justice, then, all were it my father stood on the one side, and the devil on the other, his cause being good, the devil should have right." Luther and many modern jurists would reinterpret the law to do the devil down, and the moderns, at least, would reserve to themselves authority to decide which is the father and which the devil.

Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons* got More remarkably right. In one scene, More, then the Lord Chancellor, argues with family members who are urging him to arrest Richard Rich, the man who was later to betray him. More's daughter, Margaret, says, "Father, that man's bad." More answers, "There is no law against that." His son-in-law, William Roper: "There is! God's law!" More: "Then God can arrest him. . . . The law, Roper, the law. I know what's legal, not what's right. And I'll stick to what's legal. . . . I'm *not* God. The currents and eddies of right and wrong, which you find such plain sailing, I can't navigate. I'm no voyager. But in the thickets of the law, oh, there I'm a forester."

Bolt, in a familiar passage, has More say when assailed by his son-in-law with the charge that he

would give the devil the benefit of law:

MORE: Yes. What would you do? Cut a great road through the law to get after the devil?

ROPER: I'd cut down every law in England to do that!

MORE: Oh? . . . And when the last law was down, and the Devil turned round on you—where would you hide, Roper, the laws all being flat? . . . This country's planted thick with laws from coast to coast—man's laws, not God's—and if you cut them down . . . d'you really think you could stand upright in the winds that would blow then? . . . Yes, I'd give the Devil benefit of law, for my own safety's sake.

To understand More, then, it is equally important to realize his absolute commitment to law and his recognition of the fallibility of human moral reasoning. To be ruled by each individual's moral beliefs is to invite, indeed to guarantee, social tumult and disorder. The law alone is uniform, a composite or compromise of varying moral assessments, to be applied to all alike, regardless of personal attitudes about the persons involved: father or devil, it makes no difference. If an acceptable mix of freedom and order are to be maintained, obedience to law must be accepted as a primary moral duty.

The veneration More gave to law, he also gave, and for the same reason, to constituted authority. More served Henry VIII, a sovereign whose policies he often believed to be immoral or profoundly unwise. He was under no illusions about his king, even as we should be under no illusions about our governors or even the democratic will. When Roper rejoiced at how friendly Henry was to More, he replied, "I have no cause to be proud thereof, for if my head could win him a castle in France it should not fail to go." Yet he did not disobey; he might give contrary advice, but, the policy or the law once decided upon, he complied. He disapproved of Henry's ruinous war with France, but, as Speaker, he asked Parliament for extraordinary and unpopular taxes to support that war. Later, when More was Lord Chancellor, and it was proposed to put Parliament in control of the Church, Richard Marius tells us "More was sick at heart at the prospect . . . [but] he could not control events. Worse, he was a respectable figurehead, kept by the government to lend it whatever authority his reputation gave him, serving by his very presence in the post of Lord Chancellor a cause which was to him abominable." He wanted to resign. "Yet he could not resign, for to do so would have been to run the risk of making his opposition to the king public."

Henry commanded More to speak in the House of Lords to say that the king was pursuing his divorce from Catherine as a matter of religious scruple and not for love of any other woman. In doing so, More pointed out that various universities agreed the first

marriage had been unlawful. Someone asked More's opinion and he replied that he had given it to the king and said no more. As Chambers put it, "Respect for authority . . . was the foundation of [More's] political thinking." He presented the king's case, but would not go an inch further.

Why, then, this obedience to constituted authority and to law, even when he regarded them as immoral? It may have been partly ambition; it was surely, in large part, fear of the alternative to law. An Elizabethan play, probably written by Shakespeare, has More attempt to quell rioters against aliens in London:

Grant them removed, and grant that this your
noise
Hath chid down all the majesty of England.
Imagine . . .
Authority quite silenced by your brawl. . . .
What had you got? I'll tell you. You had taught
How insolence and strong hand should prevail,
How order should be quelled; and by this
pattern
Not one of you should live an aged man;
For other ruffians, as their fancies wrought
With self same hand, self reasons and self right
Would shark on you; and men like ravenous
fishes
Would feed on one another.

It may be counted unfortunate that More's speech was followed immediately by a riot. He was no more successful than were a few professors in the sixties extolling the virtues of prudence and order to rampaging students.

But there is more than the fear of lawlessness and tumult. There is the thought that he is not sure about morality, that he may be wrong. When Roper says to him, "The law's your god," More replies, "Oh, Roper you're a fool, God's my god. . . . But I find Him rather too subtle. . . . I don't know where He is nor what He wants."

Again he says: "God made the *angels* to show Him splendor—as He made animals for innocence and plants for their simplicity. But man He made to serve Him wittily, in the tangle of his mind." Not in the pride and certainty of the individual conscience, but in the tangle of his mind. It was because More recognized the fallibility of individual minds that he obeyed authority but saw no need or virtue in doing more than authority required when his mind told him that what was ordered was wrong.

The recalcitrance that brought More to the headsman was his refusal to take the oath that Henry was the Supreme Head of the Church in England and endorse a series of acts ending the supremacy of the Pope. The source of More's devotion to papal supremacy illuminates the man. The point was not

that the Pope's authority had been instituted immediately by God (indeed Christianity was several centuries old before papal authority as it would come to be understood was clearly established), but that the Pope's power rested upon the inherited traditions and beliefs and the general councils of the Church. The councils, of course, and the evolution of the Church were believed to be guided by God. Here again, More's faith and his view of law became almost indistinguishable.

His recalcitrance may be seen, as it often is, as More's one great act of disobedience. Bolt writes that More seemed to him "a man with an adamant sense of his own self." "He knew where he began and left off, what areas of himself he could yield to the encroachments of his enemies, and what to the encroachments to those he loved. . . . But at length he was asked to retreat from that final area where he located his self. And there this supple, humorous, unassuming, and sophisticated person set like metal, was overtaken by an absolutely primitive rigor, and could no more be budged than a cliff." It is this behavior that causes Bolt to refer to More as a "hero of selfhood." Indeed it was extraordinary behavior: More was the only person not a member of the clergy who died rather than take the oath.

Yet it seems wrong, or at least potentially misleading, to attribute More's behavior to "selfhood." It is a symptom of our disorder that we glorify, practically deify, the individual conscience. It was not always so. It must have been well into this century before "civil disobedience" and "heresy" became terms of praise. To the contrary, More's behavior may be seen as submission to external authority, a conscious and difficult *denial* of self.

The refusal to take the oath should not, of course, be viewed as disobedience at all. There was a law higher than Henry's and Parliament's, and More knew that the oath violated that law. There were few other occasions on which that could be said with certainty. More, an exemplary courtier, servant, and confidante of the king, did not suppose that God's will was clear enough to require refusal to serve the king even when his purposes seemed to More unjust; he even assisted the king in temporal struggles against the Pope, as, given his understanding of his respective duties, he should have. God's law is not often clear to the tangled mind of man, but there was a central fact about which More could have no doubt: Christ did not leave behind a book but a Church, and that Church must not be divided. As to this ultimate thing, he, at last, knew where God was and what He wanted. More was caught between two authorities and the question for him, the commands of both being clear, was which authority was superior. At this extremity, God was no longer too subtle for him, and More obeyed God's law and went to his death. This was not disobedience but obedience, a thought he expressed in his last words as he placed his head

on the block: "I die the king's good servant, but God's first."

II

Individualism in the law, as in matters of faith, produces the substitution of private morality for public law and duty. This is precisely what More thought Luther was encouraging in his own day, and it is even more prominent in ours. That may be seen in the growth of legal nullification, the refusal to be bound by external rules, that is not only widespread among the American people but, more ominously, in the basic institutions of the law. More applied his injunction as much to the judge on the bench as to rioters in the street. We all recognize rioters as civil disobedients but we are less likely to recognize that the judge who ignores law or who creates constitutional law out of his own conscience is equally civilly disobedient. In 1975 Alexander Bickel, in *The Morality of Consent*, recounted the then recent American experience with disrupters in the streets, but added: "The assault upon the legal order by moral imperatives was not only or perhaps even most effectively an assault from the outside." It came as well from a Court that cut through law to do what it considered "right" and "good." Our law schools now construct theoretical justifications for that particularly corrosive form of civil disobedience, explaining that judges should create, and enforce as constitutional law, individual rights that are nowhere to be found in the Constitution.

Against the backdrop of Justices disregarding the law, it is not surprising that jurors are refusing to be bound by either law or evidence if the results do not fit their personal views. Our representatives enact the laws but juries scattered across the country vote on them again, often overturning the democratic choice. This pernicious practice occurs not only *sub silentio* but is coming into the open. There is even a national organization, the "Fully Informed Jury Association," to justify and encourage jury lawlessness. Some nullification occurs because black jurors think the law is arrayed against them or out of racial solidarity (the O. J. Simpson verdict), but other defiance reflects libertarian attitudes and personal disapproval of the law (the Jack Kevorkian acquittals). According to the *Washington Post*, a poll shows that three out of four Americans say they would disregard the judge's instructions if the law contravened their own ideas of right and wrong.

Now we have seen Senate nullification of the law of impeachment. The evidence left no doubt that the President had deliberately and repeatedly committed perjury, tampered with witnesses, and obstructed justice. Felonies, all of them. Nor is there any doubt, based on the Framers' understanding and prior Senate precedent, that these offenses constituted "high crimes and misdemeanors" requiring removal from

office. Yet the Senate felt free to prefer partisan interests to law, and refused to convict.

These are manifestations in the law of the absorption with self and the disrespect for inconvenient rules that permeate our culture. This absorption, variously called radical individualism or autonomy, is taken to justify even institutional lawlessness. As Bickel noted, civil disobedience, no matter by whom or in what cause, is always "a decision in favor of self, in favor of the idea of self." That is why, in the law, it encourages moral relativism, which is a leading feature of modern constitutional adjudication as well as jury verdicts and legislatures sitting as courts of impeachment.

To all this Thomas More provides the sharpest contrast. As Chambers notes, "From [his book] *Utopia* to the scaffold, More stands for the common cause, as against the private commodity of the single man." If obedience to constituted authority and to established law was at the center of More's morality in the reign of Henry VIII, how much more would it have been his guiding principle when law and policy owe their legitimacy to being democratically made, when they are, in the most real sense they can be, the will of the community?

For More, morality was superior to both human law and the will of the sovereign in that it could be used to shape or to alter that law and that will, though not to justify disobedience to it. This clearly appears in *Utopia*, where he argued that it was a man's duty to enter public life despite the evil necessarily entailed, saying, "That which you cannot turn to good, so to order it that it be not very bad." In a word, try to make law as moral as you can, More constantly argued, but when it is made, whatever it commands, morality lies in obedience. If disobedience is ever justified, it is only when the issue is of transcendent importance and when you are absolutely sure of the right and wrong of the matter. In a democratic polity there can be such occasions, but they will be extremely rare.

These are issues of law and morality internal to the United States, but they arise internationally as well. What we call international law is, of course, in many respects not yet law in any real sense. It is in a formative stage, the stage at which More would have felt free to infuse morality. This raises the increasingly important question whether we should try to build an international law, or pretend there is one, about the use of armed force between nations. In the present condition of the world—a condition that looks permanent or at least likely to be of indefinite duration—I think More would say no. It must be "no" because such law cannot be moral, since, to be called international, rules about armed force must necessarily express a "morality" acceptable to immoral regimes.

Go back to the debate over the legality of the United States' invasion of Grenada in October 1983. At

the time, a number of people denounced the invasion as illegal, while others defended its legality. In a discussion with an international law expert, I pointed to three factors that most people deemed relevant to the American action in Grenada. First, the Grenadan government had been formed by a minority that seized power by violence and maintained it by terror. Second, it was a Marxist-Leninist regime and so represented a further advance in this hemisphere of a power that threatened freedom and democracy throughout the world. Third, the people of Grenada were ecstatic at being relieved of that tyrannical government.

I said then that these three factors seemed to me morally relevant and asked whether they were relevant in international law. The answer was no. That answer was correct because there is no consensus among nations that any of these considerations justifies an invasion. This means that when we act for moral reasons, we cannot give those reasons and must, to the degree we acquiesce in the false notion that there is already a binding international law, cast ourselves in a false position. When the rules we are asked to call "law" must exclude, and indeed condemn, moral action, it would appear better not to call them laws or confer upon them the prestige of that name. Otherwise, we are forced to renounce our morality or else accept the role of disobedients. Thomas More could hardly approve of either course.

A somewhat different problem with international law is posed by the detention in London of General Augusto Pinochet with the possibility of extraditing him to Spain for crimes—namely, the murder of Spaniards—allegedly ordered or condoned by him in Chile. The claim is that there exists an international law that justifies his trial and punishment. I pass by a point that some may consider to have weight: Pinochet saved Chile from a Marxist dictatorship and the despotism, horrors, and bloodshed all such regimes inevitably bring, and, having converted the economy to prosperity through free market reforms, he voluntarily relinquished power to a democratic government. We cannot know what Thomas More would have thought of this episode, but if his attitude toward the heretics of his day is any guide, he might have approved what Pinochet did. The worldwide Communist advance was certainly an assault upon the human soul.

However one comes out on that issue, what is perhaps more worrying is that Pinochet's arrest sets a precedent all free countries may come to regret. By a parity of reasoning, Ronald Reagan might have been subject to arrest and trial abroad for the bombing of Libya, George Bush for the invasion of Iraq, and Bill Clinton for the air strikes on Afghanistan, Sudan, Iraq, and Yugoslavia. These may not be realistic examples, but one wonders about a "law" that will, inevitably, apply only to leaders of small nations who

happen to be caught abroad. After all, nothing is said about international law when our government greets with elaborate ceremonies the most murderous Chinese officials. More's warnings to the rioters in London could equally be applied to England and Spain in Pinochet's case: You have taught that insolence and self-righteousness should prevail. Other nations may shark on you and like ravenous fishes feed on one another.

International "law" provides a warning of what domestic law can become if the nullification of law by courts, juries, and legislatures continues on its present course. If some find the obedience More taught too austere for comfort, they ought at least reflect on the question of how much glorification of the individual conscience any legal order can tolerate and remain a legal order. They ought also to ask how much privatization of morality the moral order can withstand and remain a moral order.

In the culture war of the sixteenth century, More was an active combatant for the binding force of law and the uniformity of religion under the Catholic Church. Our culture war is more confusing and diffuse, but at its center it too is a struggle over the uniformity and stability of law. What is true of law is true of other social restraints, not only of morality, ethics, and manners, but also of respect for craftsmanship, which requires, at its highest, the sublimation of self-will to external standards. Hence, as one might expect from the progress of radical autonomy in the law, we observe formless music, meaningless and offensive art, adolescent entertainment, subjective journalism, and an enthusiasm for genetic technology that may soon threaten the essence of what it is to be human. One important segment of a culture does not collapse and leave the adjacent structures intact. Law both reflects the state of our culture and actively alters it. The divisions between areas of culture are only membranes, and permeable ones at that.

More's life reminds us that the struggle between order and disorder, between authority and the urges of self, is a permanent feature of our condition. Liberty of conscience is a concept easily blurred, or indeed born blurry, and, misunderstood, it can be a force for social fragmentation. Liberty of conscience, insofar as it means the freedom of the individual to construct his own norms, moves from religion to morality, from morality to law, and hence to religious, moral, and legal anarchy. As Ackroyd said: "[More] embodied the old order of hierarchy and authority at the very moment when it began to collapse all around him." He died for the sake of that order.

More lost, and so may we, but he has much to teach us nonetheless, about steadfastness as a minority, even perhaps as a permanent and dwindling minority. He may even teach us that sometimes staunch minorities are remembered well. ^[1]

The University at the Heart of the Church

John J. Piderit

The apostolic constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* (ECE), “From the Heart of the Church,” which Pope John Paul II issued in 1990, was meant to articulate the relationship between higher education, faith, Christian culture, and the Roman Catholic Church. ECE provided a universal and comprehensive vision of Catholic higher education worldwide, leaving it to the conference of bishops in each nation to design appropriate structures to implement ECE in that country. After years of discussion, in 1996 the U.S. National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) forwarded an implementation plan (henceforth “the Application”) to Rome for final approval.

The Holy See returned the bishops’ proposal in the summer of 1998, indicating that a second draft of the Application was needed because the first draft did not satisfactorily implement the Pope’s vision for Catholic higher education. This saddened the presidents of most Catholic colleges and universities and surprised many bishops, though other bishops had seen that they had left out at least one essential ingredient from the 1996 draft: a requirement of canon 812 of canon law mentioned in ECE. Canon 812 states that anyone teaching Catholic theology in a Catholic institution needs some form of ecclesiastical approval, a “mandate” to teach that comes from the “competent ecclesiastical authority.” In the 1996 Application the mandate was referred to in a footnote, but the bishops made no attempt to apply it to Catholic theologians in the United States.

The mandate bears witness to the fact that those teaching Catholic theology do so in communion with the Church. In other words, they will not teach as Catholic theology what is contrary to the Church’s teaching. The authorization comes from “the competent ecclesiastical authority,” which usually means the local bishop (in canon law often called “the ordi-

nary”), although the wording of the law does allow the bishops’ conference to suggest another competent authority. For most of this essay, however, I will assume that the local bishop is indeed the competent ecclesiastical authority.

In their 1996 Application the U.S. bishops had agreed to avoid introducing the mandate, primarily because the presidents of Catholic universities reacted very negatively to it. The presidents considered the mandate to be part of a juridical approach, which they eschewed, preferring the language of “communio,” i.e., being in communion with the Church, locally, nationally, and internationally, rather than being subject to the Church. Catholic universities are committed to maintaining good communications and strong relationships with the bishops; the presidents felt that communion and communication with the bishop would obviate a need for a formal submission to him. The presidents were suspicious of a juridical approach, both because they saw the mandate as jeopardizing the academic autonomy of Catholic universities and because they feared the mandate could entangle universities in unnecessary lawsuits with significant financial consequences.

Some time after the Holy See returned the bishops’ first draft, the NCCB formed a task force under the leadership of Anthony Cardinal Bevilacqua, Archbishop of Philadelphia, to draw up a proposal that would explicitly include the mandate, and to do so in a way that explicitly accents *communio*. This proposal adds discussion of the mandate, *communio*, and Catholic identity to the first draft, and has now been circulated to the bishops and the presidents of the Catholic universities for their comment.

To date, the presidents have responded negatively to the Bevilacqua proposal. Since the most controverted part of the proposal is the mandate and the bishops have indicated flexibility concerning the other issues in it, I will restrict my comments in this

JOHN J. PIDERIT, S.J., is President of Loyola University in Chicago.

essay to the mandate.

The presidents want to avoid the mandate because they believe that applying it will undermine the essential autonomy necessary for Catholic universities to prosper in the United States. Many presidents would prefer to seek an indult, or exemption, from Rome that would not require the U.S. bishops to apply canon 812 to Catholic universities. An exemption from Rome, however, is very unrealistic. Not only is it rarely given, but the Holy See is looking to the United States, with its large array of Catholic institutions of higher education, to take the lead in implementing ECE. If the Holy See were to grant an indult in this instance, it is likely that many other countries would request similar exemptions.

My view on the mandate differs significantly from the expressed views of many of my brother and sister presidents. By articulating an alternate view, I hope to clarify some issues and indicate areas where fruitful dialogue between the bishops and presidents can take place. First, while I do not think that a juridical approach—requiring Catholic theologians to secure the mandate—guarantees the Catholicity of a Catholic university, I also think that the proposed approach does not undermine the autonomy of a Catholic university. Second, I think it is very important that Catholic universities in the United States not distance themselves from the Holy See, the center of the Catholic faith. Third, I think the Bevilacqua proposal can be improved and refined. And fourth, I believe good results could emerge from incorporating the mandate into Catholic higher education in the United States.

I write as the president of a Catholic university, not as a theologian at a Catholic university. Of course, bishops and presidents should hear the points advanced by theologians, since theologians have a vital stake in the question of the mandate. And in a vibrant Church, the work of theologians serves as a gift and service to both the hierarchy and the faithful. Yet we must acknowledge that there are inevitable tensions between theologians and bishops. Theologians often develop their ideas in directions that, even when not clearly contrary to the faith, make bishops uncomfortable. Bishops want to grant a significant role to theologians, but a role clearly within the Church. Within this dialectic between bishop and theologian, the Church has been and continues to be enriched. Outside the dialectic, there is unfruitful tension.

The Bevilacqua proposal concerning the mandate is deftly structured, avoiding entanglement of the bishops in the internal affairs of Catholic universities while still implementing the mandate. It does this by defining the mandate as a relationship between the local bishop and the individual Catholic theologian; it addresses the Catholic theology at the heart of the Catholic university without setting up a

formal relationship with the university itself. Although it avoids direct dealings with the university, its indirect impact on the Catholic university may be substantial. For example, it may prompt doctoral candidates in theology to prepare more carefully to teach Catholic theology from the perspective of the Church. Such a development would be beneficial to universities and the life of the Church without jeopardizing the autonomy of the university.

As Francis Cardinal George, Archbishop of Chicago, pointed out in his firm but nuanced presentation to the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities in early February (*Origins*, February 18, 1999), merely having a relationship with someone does not imply control. Any relationship—personal or institutional—that includes respect and common goals means that each partner will influence the other, but influence does not necessarily entail control. To be sure, any relationship can deteriorate, and friendly mutual influence can degenerate into coercion. It is important, therefore, that what could be a nurturing, productive, and salubrious relationship be protected from abuse.

Since it sees the mandate as a relationship between the bishop and the theologian rather than the university, the Bevilacqua proposal also places the responsibility for securing the mandate on the Catholic theologian, not on the university. If the Catholic theologian does not secure the mandate, no penalty is mentioned or threatened in the Bevilacqua proposal. The Catholic university retains the option to hire a Catholic or non-Catholic theologian, one with or without the mandate, one who promises to request or refuses to request the mandate. The Bevilacqua proposal shows great restraint in this regard. Contrary to many reports in the media, the bishops are not attempting to control the university via the mandate. They are merely trying to fulfill their responsibility as pastors to make sure that Catholic truths are faithfully presented within the framework of Catholic higher education.

As a president, I am used to compromises. As long as the essential autonomy of Catholic universities will not be undermined, I am confident that the presidents and bishops can find a number of different ways to implement the mandate. Also, since the application of the mandate does not directly involve the Catholic university as an institution, its application, I believe, will not directly affect the nature of the institution. Nonetheless, it may, as already noted, have powerful indirect effects.

The bishops esteem Catholic universities and want them to flourish as universities, with freedom to advance our knowledge. But they also want them to flourish as centers of Catholic thought and belief. The universities' unwillingness to cooperate with the bishops and the Holy See over the mandate—a requirement of the universal canon law of the

Church—sends the wrong message to Catholics in the United States. Even worse, a refusal to cooperate suggests that the Catholic colleges and universities are not responsive to priorities established by the Holy See.

Yes, some presidents are reluctant to implement the mandate because, they say, it signals to other universities that Catholic institutions of higher education are beholden to Rome. But this clearly overstates the situation. Catholic universities adopt many of their practices from the general context of higher education in the United States and around the world; since they emerge from the Church and draw from the heritage and teaching of the Church, it should not be surprising to non-Catholics that the Catholic universities also relate features of Catholic heritage to the university. At the end of the twentieth century, diversity is especially revered at most universities, whether secular or religious. Having universities that are sensitive to such non-burdensome religious requirements as this mandate adds to the wealth and diversity of American higher education. Universities that take religious faith seriously and that value their international relationship with the center of their faith contribute to diversity in a fruitful way.

The Bevilacqua proposal is just that, a proposal, and it is open to other expressions of “communion with the Church” that provide protection to institutions and individuals. Ultimately, the document should be one that truly conforms to canon law, but in a way that makes sense for Catholic colleges and universities in the United States. Father James Conn, S.J., has already raised (*America*, January 30, 1999) a number of issues related to the mandate that need clarification, and he has made helpful suggestions about ways to address them.

Fr. Conn notes that the mandate might be granted by the local ordinary at the recommendation of a committee composed of Catholic theologians, lay people, and ecclesiastics. This suggestion has great merit. Once established, such a committee might be designated as the group responsible for recommendations to several ordinaries in a given region. Alternatively, such a committee might be a resource for the entire United States. Any bishop might request a recommendation from this committee for a theologian seeking the mandate. Alternatively, if bishops were included on the committee, this might be the “competent ecclesiastical authority.” In addition to establishing the usual procedure for securing the mandate, some appeal process should be established to provide sufficient review of content and process for someone denied the mandate.

Another possible improvement on the Bevilacqua proposal relates to the person designated as the competent ecclesiastical authority. Until now, I have assumed that this is the local ordinary. An alternative approach would be to allow a Catholic theologian

seeking the mandate to apply to any bishop in the United States. Such an arrangement would make it even less likely that the local ordinary would have influence over a particular university, since the ordinary granting the mandate might be thousands of miles away from the Catholic institution involved. This model would be similar to the practice that used to prevail concerning the *imprimatur*, the permission granted from a bishop to print a book on Catholic matters. The author had discretion in choosing the ordinary who would grant the *imprimatur*. Similar discretion could be granted to the person seeking the mandate.

It is my view that any proposed manner of implementing the mandate should be thoroughly reviewed by lawyers to determine the liabilities to which universities or bishops might be exposed. A preliminary review undertaken by the bishops concluded that no new constitutional issues are created through the mandate. But in addition to passing constitutional muster, the mandate should be reviewed to determine what new types of lawsuits may arise.

In addition to clarifying connections with the Holy See, the mandate has other potential benefits. Since the mandate relates directly to Catholic theologians and only indirectly to the universities themselves, the benefits will arise because of the new ways Catholic theologians will contribute to their universities. Many aspiring theology professors will, I suspect, wish to secure the mandate as a certification that they are competent to teach Catholic theology and related disciplines to undergraduates, and will choose a course of studies that prepares them for that certification. If this happens, it will benefit both universities and the Church.

A number of presidents have suggested that young theologians will not seek the mandate. Perhaps, but I suspect the opposite. Catholic courses are becoming more popular even at secular universities, and theologians are being hired at secular universities because they are trained in Catholic theology. Given this “market pressure,” I anticipate that many theologians will apply for the mandate, and will accept it with pride. Some young (or older) theologians teaching at secular universities will also apply, I suspect, even though, since they do not teach at a Catholic institution of higher education, it will not be required of them. Catholic theologians at non-Catholic universities might even set the trend with respect to the mandate, precisely because they are less concerned with a bishop “interfering” in their universities. If the process works in a sound and non-intrusive way with them, then colleagues at Catholic universities might well feel comfortable following their lead. In this way, the community of Catholic theologians could demonstrate their desire to teach Catholic theology with the approval of the Church. I also suspect that students at Catholic universities will want

to seek out faculty with the mandate, because they want to be sure that they are learning what Roman Catholicism teaches. Both of these developments would be of great benefit to the Church.

Along with many university presidents, I enthusiastically endorsed the first Application to the Holy See in 1996. I have since modified my position because I now see, as I did not before, how much importance the Holy See places on implementing canon 812.

A great attraction of the Catholic Church over the past two millennia, in the eyes of many non-Catholics as well as most Catholics, is her universal character. The Church, like any large organization, must have rules and procedures that apply to all, even while making room for local adaptation and flexibility. It is right, too, that the Church should require that certain formulas of faith be the same *urbi et orbi*, while permitting variations in shape and tone to fit a particular culture. Finally, it is fitting that the code of canon law, which guides the Church in her vast activities and operations, should be the same throughout the world.

By rejecting the 1996 Application and asking for revisions, the Holy See has made it clear that it is in earnest in wanting canon 812 to be applied to the United States. The mandate itself is appropriate, and in places such as Germany where it has been used for many years, the experience has been positive. Rome is giving the Church in the U.S. considerable latitude in determining how the canon will be applied. This formal expression of a priority by the highest governing level of the Church, coupled with the Holy See's willingness to be flexible in how the priority is met, is sufficient for me.

I also see more clearly than I did before the reasons why Rome is insisting on this priority. It is best to see this conflict over the mandate in the larger historical context of Catholic higher education, both here and abroad. *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, after all, did not come out of nowhere. It was designed to meet a situation that, in virtually everybody's opinion, needed remedying: the rapid and distressing decline of a strong religious presence at Catholic universities, and the si-

multaneous desire to foster a renewal of the Catholic intellectual presence in secular culture. *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*'s first sentence points out that universities as institutions grew out of a relationship with the Church: "Born from the heart of the Church, the Catholic university is located in that course of tradition which may be traced back to the very origin of the university as an institution." As its conclusion makes clear, ECE wants Catholic universities to change so that their students and faculty make the Christian message more compelling: "The renewal requested of Catholic universities will make them better able to respond to the task of bringing the message of Christ to man, to society, to the various cultures."

Nearly all who are involved, or even just interested, in Catholic higher education find this language to be heartening and mobilizing—a clarion call as well as a "magna carta." But if we also agree with ECE that "every Catholic University, without ceasing to be a University, has a relationship to the Church that is essential to its institutional identity" and that "[each has] a special bond with the Holy See," then it stands to reason that those of us in the trenches of Catholic education should bend a little to realize this goal.

As Cardinal George noted, "the gift of apostolic governance" is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In view of the cogency and desirability of the goals expressed in ECE, and as a demonstration of our belief that all Catholics, in Cardinal George's words, are "both invisibly (spiritually) and visibly (socially and juridically) related to our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world," it is appropriate to rely on bishops for apostolic governance.

I think Catholic university presidents have a splendid opportunity to demonstrate the high priority we place on being in communion with the larger Church. This palpable "communio" is the basis for the kinds of collaborative relationships between the hierarchy and Catholic universities that *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* called for. A carefully crafted and articulated implementation of the mandate will be the beginning of one such beautiful relationship. □

The World According to Clinton

Andrew J. Bacevich

As part of its professed commitment to “complete the unfinished business of the Second World War,” the Clinton Administration last year released its second and final report on “Nazi Gold.” Drafted by a team of government historians working under the supervision of Undersecretary of State Stuart E. Eizenstat, this document evaluates the economic and commercial relations between Germany and several nations that remained neutral in World War II.

In many respects, the Eizenstat report qualifies as an impressive achievement. It is comprehensive, richly documented, and encrusted with scholarly paraphernalia. The tone is evenhanded, the language measured, consistent with Eizenstat’s stated intention of rendering a report “dispassionate in its analysis and unflinching in its determination to discern all the dimensions of the facts.”

Eizenstat insists that the result is “not intended to be nor is it an accusation or indictment of any country.” That assurance may soften but cannot disguise the report’s central finding, sharply censuring Argentina, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and Turkey for their wartime behavior. Although formally neutral, these nations, Eizenstat concludes, pursued policies that in their impact were decidedly not neutral. At times, those policies advanced the Allied cause. More frequently, they worked to benefit Adolf Hitler. This was notably the case regarding trade. According to Eizenstat, the sale to the Third Reich of strategic materials and industrial products—often paid for with gold looted from occupied Europe or stolen from Holocaust victims—was crucial to sustaining the German war machine. Although “acceptable by the standards of the time” and understandable as long as the Wehrmacht remained formidable, trade continued “well past the point where, from the Allied perspective at the time, there was a

genuine threat of German attack.” As the report notes with barely suppressed disapproval, the neutrals justified this trade according to “their own strictly legal interpretations of what was permissible under existing international law, as distinct from moral considerations of what was right or wrong.” As a determinant of policy, the evil represented by Nazism seemingly figured not at all. Eizenstat—and by extension the United States government—effectively convicts the neutrals of moral indifference.

Why did the Clinton Administration feel obliged to undertake this project, reviving distant controversies, inviting charges of American arrogance, and perhaps alienating nations that are, after all, in the 1990s valued friends and responsible democracies? Eizenstat takes pains to emphasize that the inquiry was no mere academic exercise in setting the record straight. On the contrary, he believes that the policy implications of the report are profound. “By completing the unfinished business of the middle of this century,” Eizenstat writes, “we can enter the new millennium having attempted a moral accounting of this lingering ledger of grief.” Reverting to a metaphor much favored by the President himself, he explains that such efforts at moral accounting are “meant to be bridges: between searing history and enduring memory; between brutality and humanity; and between a bitter past and a better future.”

Given the present Administration’s otherwise shaky moral credentials, it is tempting to dismiss such flourishes as fatuous and contrived, but that would be wrong. As an attempt by this Administration to pass judgment on the past, the Eizenstat report is much more than an exercise in public relations. Indeed, it forms part of a larger enterprise, especially evident in Mr. Clinton’s second term, to adjudicate history. Even as he gestures towards the new millennium, this President is intensely preoccupied with tying up the loose ends of ages past.

ANDREW J. BACEVICH is Professor of International Relations at Boston University.

The motivation for this preoccupation is not anti-quarian; history provides the Administration with a means to legitimize its political vision. Hillary Rodham Clinton made this link explicit at the White House Millennium event in calling Americans to "honor the past and imagine the future." The sentiment may be banal, but to dismiss it as such is to do Mrs. Clinton, by all reports someone not given to frivolity, an injustice. She and other members of her husband's Administration intend to be taken seriously.

Indeed, taking seriously efforts such as the Eisenhower report to close the books on the twentieth century offers insight into the larger endeavor upon which the President and his lieutenants have embarked. And it is a large endeavor indeed.

The inspiration for this exercise in settling historical accounts derives from the 1960s. The passions that gave that decade its distinctive character also gave rise to a peculiar mythology. The constituent parts of this mythology were not empirically true; yet neither were they without foundation. Together, however, they transcended truth to constitute—at least for some—a new political creed supplanting the nervous consensus of the immediate postwar era.

Foremost among those myths was the assertion that in the twentieth century survival itself had become problematic. Human ingenuity and recklessness posed a danger to human existence. Providing Exhibit A for this view was the atomic bomb, developed and employed by the United States and subsequently adopted as the centerpiece of U.S. national security policy. But the looming prospect of nuclear armageddon also lent credibility to purveyors of doom touting other threats of ostensibly comparable danger: overpopulation, the exhaustion of the world's resources, ecological collapse, and global warming.

A second and related element of this mythology was a deep-seated skepticism about the nation's founding ideals. On the one hand, an obsessive and dispiriting materialism provoked doubts about the meaning of American freedom. On the other, the pervasiveness of racism belied the nation's professed commitment to justice and equality. The plight of African Americans, in turn, galvanized others to see their own grievances as evidence of discrimination and systematic oppression. Native Americans, ethnics, homosexuals, the aged, Vietnam vets, the disabled, and, above all, women discovered that they were all victims.

The third element was a corresponding skepticism about America's role in world affairs. According to the official line espoused by Washington, the overarching goal of postwar U.S. foreign policy was to promote peace and democracy. The actions of the Central Intelligence Agency and the Pentagon—

evidenced in the 1960s above all by the endless and brutal Vietnam War—suggested an alternative explanation: that the United States was an imperial power bent on further expansion. Not high ideals but the selfish interests of a militarized ruling class motivated American behavior abroad. A related concern, hotly debated, rejected orthodox interpretations of the Cold War and assigned principal responsibility for its origins—and consequences—to Washington rather than to the Kremlin.

These myths constituted the intellectual birthright of the generation that came of age in the 1960s, the talented and idealistic baby boomers who like the Clintons studied at elite universities, flouted convention, mocked their elders, marched and demonstrated, and then with exquisite timing abandoned protest in favor of high-flying careers. Three decades ago the leading members of this generation disparaged American affluence as shallow and corrupting and American power as dangerous and repressive. Today, with the country wealthier and more powerful still, they preside over its principal institutions.

Along the way, they made an important discovery: as a blueprint for governance, the mythology of the 1960s is next to useless. Specifically, the old articles of faith are irrelevant to what National Security Advisor Sandy Berger describes as the Clinton "strategy for harnessing the forces of globalization." With its connotations of technological triumphalism, limitless opportunities for generating wealth, and the inexorable advance of democratic capitalism, "globalization" has long since supplanted "Power to the People" as this generation's favored cliché. As depicted by the Clinton Administration, globalization is a force of nature, a tsunami transforming politics and economics alike.

In the new age of globalization that beckons, according to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in a speech at Tennessee State University, the United States provides the "organizing principal" [sic]. America's place is at "the center of this emerging international system." Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott has gone a step further, declaring that the United States is "hegemon and proud of it." For those who share such heady notions, the received mythology, leery of privilege and power, especially if wielded by the United States government, is altogether an impediment.

From his vantage point in the Bully Pulpit, Bill Clinton serves as chief evangelist for the gospel of globalization. For a child of the 1960s, assuming this role has required considerable finesse. The President must celebrate the wonders of the global market, yet do so in a way that deflects charges of crassness or of abandoning high ideals. He must promote and even increase American preeminence, yet without seeming to renounce the wariness of power underlying his

generation's original claim to moral authority. To this end, nothing has been more useful for the President than citing the "lessons" of history; creatively reinterpreting the past "teaches" us how to divine the future. It is all a matter, as Mr. Clinton has explained with the certainty of an old Marxist-Leninist ideology, of being on "the right side of history."

The American claim to being the "organizing principal" of the new age rests on the certainty that the United States embodies that right side, and that Americans, especially senior government officials, are uniquely equipped to discern the direction of world affairs. After all, as Secretary Albright has explained, "We stand tall, and therefore we can see further into the future." The mission of the United States on the eve of the new millennium is to coax others into acknowledging the direction in which historical forces tend, to commend those nations that are moving in concert with history, and to chide the reluctant to get with the program.

Thus, during President Jiang Zemin's 1997 visit to the United States, Mr. Clinton publicly rebuked the Chinese government for being on "the wrong side of history." A year later, explaining the rationale for his own trip to China, the President told reporters that "one of the things I have to do is . . . to create for them a new and different historical reality." Altering China's view of the past would enable the government in Beijing to "feel more confident in doing what I believe is the morally right thing to do."

Alas, as we know, history—not least of all U.S. history—is by no means a satisfying tale of continuous moral improvement and material progress. On the contrary: troubling errors occurred and remain unacknowledged. Wrongs have yet to be made good. And so the Clinton Administration has taken upon itself the task of clearing away the accumulated debris of the past. The effort to settle the controversies surrounding "Nazi Gold" provides one example; others include Administration efforts to redress racism, slavery, genocide, the nuclear arms race, and the Cold War.

The resulting Clinton school of historical analysis has three distinguishing characteristics, amply displayed in the Eizenstat report: narrative simplicity, moral assertiveness, and a self-proclaimed mandate to assign historical culpability. This last is essential to the Administration's purposes. Identifying victims and those guilty of wrongdoing establishes the basis for repentance, restitution, and reconciliation—and for moving expeditiously ahead.

Americans have become most familiar with this approach as it has been applied to race. Few would question the depth or sincerity of the President's determination to confront the legacy of slavery and racism. Mr. Clinton has publicly apologized for the federal government's involvement decades ago in the shameful Tuskegee study of syphilis among black

men, accurately characterizing that study as "deeply, profoundly, morally wrong." (Having offered that apology to a handful of survivors and their families, he announced that "We have put the curse behind us.") He has celebrated the courage of the children who in 1957 integrated Little Rock's Central High School. He has instituted a "national dialogue" on the subject of race, hosting town hall meetings and other events in a much publicized campaign to conclude "the unfinished work of our time, to lift the burden of race and redeem the promise of America."

The President's trip to Africa provided the occasion to venture even further into the history of racial injustice. Speaking not only on behalf of his own countrymen but also for the West as a whole, he expressed his deep personal regret for the slave trade of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. With regard to U.S. policy toward Africa in more recent decades, he also found much to lament, confessing that Americans during the Cold War had committed "the sin of neglect and ignorance."

During a brief stop in Rwanda, the President focused on an event of even more recent vintage: the explosive violence that had occurred there during Clinton's own tenure in the White House. Here too he expressed regret, albeit obliquely, for mistakes—errors of omission. Characterizing the events in Rwanda as "the most intensive slaughter in this blood-filled century we are about to leave," the President acknowledged that the entire international community "must bear its share of responsibility for this tragedy." "We did not act quickly enough after the killing began," he admitted. "We did not immediately call these crimes by their rightful name: genocide."

These presidential acts of contrition, offered with evident emotion and sincerity, evoked a predictable response from his critics. The temerity of presuming to reproach the nation, the West, and even "the entire international community" for past failings has not gone unremarked. Even Administration supporters are hard-pressed to argue that Mr. Clinton's apologies have had discernible substantive consequences. *Raison d'état*, not remorse for past offenses, continues to determine U.S. policy toward Africa, as American inaction in response to conflicts erupting in Africa since Mr. Clinton's trip makes clear. Are the war-ravaged peoples of Sierra Leone or Congo better off knowing that an American President feels their pain?

Yet there is more here than photo ops, sound bites, and political theater. Once the President has acknowledged these various historical lapses, they need no longer detain us; after all, as the First Lady reminds us, we honor the past to evoke the future, that glittering prospect of globalization to which Mr. Clinton summons us. As Attorney General Janet Reno demonstrated following the unpleasantness at

Waco in 1993, nothing serves like "accepting responsibility" to wipe the slate clean.

Apology, explicit or implied, provides the preferred mode of rectifying thorny matters such as race and slavery. When it comes to international affairs, however, history-as-parable serves. Gauging world affairs from their *fin de siècle* perspective, Administration officials describe a past that is amazingly simple to decipher and a future that is as dauntingly complex as it is exciting. There is, moreover, little connection between the two. The end of the Cold War was a watershed, signaling that the big questions had now been satisfactorily answered. The ideological rivalries and bloody conflicts that marred the twentieth century are irrelevant to the new age that is now upon us. The record of that unlamented century has little to offer—except, that is, as warning. Mr. Clinton and his lieutenants derive from that century a scant handful of lessons that Americans and others disregard at their peril.

Weapons of mass destruction, for example, have no place in the global order over which the United States intends to preside. Thus, during the spring of 1998, the sudden prospect of a nuclear arms race in South Asia provoked sweeping presidential denunciations—not simply of India and Pakistan, but of all nuclear weapons. Hastening to suppress the idea that nuclear weapons might bestow national prestige or offer political leverage after the Cold War, Mr. Clinton declared that nuclear weapons had been from the outset a historical blunder. "I cannot believe that we are about to start the twenty-first century," he remarked in dismay, "by having the Indian subcontinent repeat the worst mistakes of the twentieth century." Thus did he pitch overboard all the old theories of deterrence—while presiding over the world's most capable nuclear arsenal.

As a precursor to that new global order, the entire Cold War era—a subject of considerable controversy from the 1960s on—reduces to a sterile and not especially interesting fable. Secretary Albright entertains college audiences by recalling that she "grew up in an era when the world was pretty simple. . . . There were the Communists, run out of the Soviet Union, and there were us; the good guys and the bad guys. . . . It was fairly easy to understand." The Cold War controversies that seemed to be of great moment have today largely lost their relevance. Texts from even a decade ago that purported to analyze world affairs are now "about as useful as archeology."

The Cold War provides definitive proof of one lesson and one lesson only: like it or not, the United States has an obligation to establish and enforce the norms of international behavior. According to Albright, "Until World War II, we didn't really think that most of the world was truly part of our world."

Only after the contest with the Soviets was joined

did Americans learn that "our way of life depends on having other countries that are democracies and free-market systems that we can trade with and feel comfortable with, and also make sure that they follow the same kind of rules we do." She worries that the United States might now "forget the fundamental lesson of this century, which is that problems abroad, if left unattended, will all too often come home to America." With this in mind, Albright warns that "the single greatest danger our nation faces" at present is that it might "succumb to the temptation of isolation." In Albright's view, the nation is poised at a great crossroads: it "must choose whether to turn inward and betray the lessons of history, or to seize the opportunity before us to shape history."

There are those, on both the left and the right, who will find much to applaud in the prospect of the United States exerting itself to "shape history." There are others, again across the political spectrum, who will judge such an endeavor to be suffused with arrogance and doomed to fail.

On one point at least Mrs. Albright and the other would-be historians of the Clinton Administration are undoubtedly correct: correcting and revising the narrative of past events can boost American willingness to undertake such a project. Yet this is true only so long as Americans accede to official efforts to hijack the past.

The historian Bruce Cumings reminds us that "the state never has any use for the truth as such, but only for truth that is useful to it." The aim of the Clinton Administration in closing the books on the twentieth century is not to reveal truth but to impose a new historical orthodoxy that validates its own political agenda.

Others have noted that the historical interpretations offered by the President and his associates are frequently questionable—in glossing over, for example, the extent that Africans themselves facilitated the slave trade or blithely depicting the postwar era as "pretty simple." Certainly, the Administration's approach is conveniently selective: Eisenhower's moral accounting of World War II chastises those who cut deals with the Nazis, but avoids mentioning that the United States forged its own marriage of convenience with Joseph Stalin, a totalitarian dictator as evil and as bloodthirsty as Adolf Hitler himself.

Then there are those historical issues that somehow do not qualify for revisionism. Thus, when it comes to Vietnam, for Clinton something of a third rail, flag-waving smothers historical controversy. The President prefers to describe the war years as simply "those complicated times." On a Memorial Day visit to the Vietnam War Memorial early in his presidency, he offered this to an unfriendly audience: "Let us continue to disagree, if we must, about the war. But let us no longer let it divide us as a people any longer." Citing Lincoln's Second Inaugural Ad-

dress, he urged Americans to take from their memories of the war “a renewed sense of our national unity and purpose.”

Yet it is Abraham Lincoln, a far better historian than Bill Clinton, who alerts us to the true folly of the Clinton school. Governing in years of plenty, Mr. Clinton and those around him seem genuinely to believe that they can identify and even dictate the course of history. Governing at a moment of supreme crisis, Lincoln knew better.

Unlike Clinton, Lincoln was wise enough to accept that man does not inhabit the center of the universe. For all his determination to preserve the Union, Lincoln did not presume to fathom the historical processes at work in the Civil War. In the end, history remained the domain of Providence.

In September 1862, contemplating the discouraging course of the war, Lincoln consoled himself by affirming his belief that “the will of God prevails.” Rather than assigning himself the prerogative of di-

vining the course of history, Lincoln conceded that “it is quite possible that God’s purpose is something different from the purpose of either party.” The role of the combatants on both sides was “to effect his purpose,” even if that purpose eluded human understanding.

Lincoln’s conception of history was rooted in his appreciation of human fallibility. The view of history espoused by President Clinton—and the vast aspirations that he and his lieutenants have concocted—appear by comparison naive and pretentious. For this Administration, the true object of the exercise is not understanding or wisdom. Rather, it is to package the past into nice inoffensive bundles, neatly lined up on the near side of the President’s bridge to the new millennium. As we step off into the twenty-first century, Mr. Clinton would have us leave that history behind. But we had best step lively. For the contents of those bundles remain toxic and Mr. Clinton’s packaging is imperfect. Indeed, the bundle marked Kosovo just sprang a leak. ^[1]

Messenger

Ezekiel was calm
even when lifted by his hair
to see the glory of God—
ankles crossed,
arms at his side.
Equable, too, when his wife died.
He mourned not, as instructed,
nor threw off his sandals.
The first time he saw the Cherubim,
each with four wings and four faces;
for the entirety of a week
he sat and he shuddered—
God held him.
It left no field for imagination.
“His horses will be so many
they will cover you with dust.
You will be sought
but never again will you be found.”
The width of each door and window
is measured by a man of bronze and
the doors and windows are gone.

This he saw and no spittle formed
at the corners of his mouth.
The sober man has his place in prophecy
and the fevered man,
what can we say of his burning charity?

Samn Stockwell

Calvin and the Christian Calling

Alister McGrath

The sixteenth century was a period of tumultuous change in Western Europe. The need for some kind of moral and intellectual shake-up within the church had been obvious for some time. Many religious and political writers of the fifteenth century had been aware of the weaknesses of the medieval church and the society in which it was embedded. However, there are good reasons for thinking that few were really prepared for the radical events of the sixteenth century, which are generally referred to collectively as “the Reformation.”

The Reformation remains of central importance for Christian theology and the life of the Christian church. As the discussion of the “Evangelicals and Catholics Together” document has made clear, the theological agenda of the Reformation remains of continuing importance to modern Christianity, particularly in the United States. The Reformation raised issues that remain live issues today—questions such as “How am I saved?” or “How do I recognize a true church?” Although modern academic theology prefers the mystical world of Baudrillard’s praxis of location and the semiotics of a post-Saussurean world of self-referencing signifiers, it is clear that the issues raised by the Reformation simply will not go away. Nor should they be allowed to. They remain essential if the churches are to retain their identity as *Christian* bodies.

In taking a retrospective look at the second millennium, it is therefore both inevitable and entirely proper to explore the continuing impact of the Reformation, particularly concerning religion and public life. Three figures would immediately suggest themselves as candidates for discussion. Martin Luther (1483-1546) and Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531) represent the first phase of the Reformation, John Calvin (1509-64) the second.

ALISTER MCGRATH teaches theology at Oxford University and is the author of, among other works, *John Calvin: A Life*.

It is easy to understand why the editors of *FIRST THINGS* chose Calvin for their purpose. Calvin’s task can be thought of as consolidation rather than initiation. The first phase of the Reformation focused on issues relating to personal salvation and the need for reform in the life of the church. Although Calvin never lost sight of these themes, he is perhaps best remembered for his detailed exposition of the leading themes of the Reformed faith in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*—widely regarded as the most significant religious work of the sixteenth century—and his wrestling with issues concerning the identity of the church and its place in public life. This second aspect of his thinking developed against the all-important background of the life of the city of Geneva, which can be thought of as the laboratory within which Calvin forged his new ideas.

Calvin has excited a variety of responses, both from those who read him and from those who only read about him. He has been the object of much attention from theologians, church leaders, and historians. Some of that attention has been uncritical and laudatory; in that view, Calvin is the man who got (virtually) nothing wrong. For others, Calvin was the “dictator of Geneva,” a personally unattractive person who got (virtually) nothing right. Neither approach is of much value in understanding the man and his legacy.

Although Calvin is widely regarded as Swiss (did he not work in Geneva?), it needs to be made clear from the outset that he was French. Born in 1509 in the city of Noyon, northeast of Paris, he was baptized as “Jehan Cauvin.” His father intended his son to have a career in the church, and took what steps were necessary to secure this. At some point in the 1520s, Calvin went to the University of Paris to study arts, his intention being to proceed to study theology, where it is generally thought that he became acquainted with at least some of the leading ideas of Lutheranism. Calvin’s original career plan went

awry, though not on account of his personal religious views. His father appears to have become embroiled in a financial scandal at Noyon, making an ecclesiastical career problematical for Calvin. As a result, Calvin left Paris at some point between 1526 and 1528 and studied civil law at Orleans, graduating in 1531. Calvin's competence in matters of civil law would be of no small importance during his Geneva period.

Meanwhile, Paris was becoming increasingly agitated with Lutheranism. While the Faculty of Theology at the University of Paris was hostile to the new religious movement, the King of France, Francis I, was more positive. The agitation grew so great that when the rector of the university, Nicholas Cop, delivered an inaugural address in 1533 suggesting the need for reform of the church, it provoked outrage, and obliged Cop to flee for his life. It is not entirely clear why Calvin came to be associated with the address—some believed he had a hand in writing it—but in any event he too left Paris in haste. Cop sought refuge in the Swiss city of Basle where Calvin joined him in early 1535.

By this stage, Calvin appears to have accepted something of the agenda of the Reformation—Calvin scholars have spilled much ink over a tantalizingly opaque passage in one of Calvin's later writings, which speaks of his undergoing a "sudden conversion" at some unspecified date and place. Early writings, such as a privately published commentary on Seneca's *On Clemency* (1532), cast little light on his religious views. Yet while in exile in Basle, Calvin penned the first edition of a work that would establish his reputation as a vigorous and informed defender of the reformed faith. *Institutes of the Christian Religion* appeared in 1536, and would undergo successive revisions until the final edition of 1559. While it would not be fair to Calvin to suggest that this is his only work of importance, there is little doubt that it continues to be his most influential work.

Calvin's future remained uncertain. After various meanderings in Europe, he returned to Paris to settle some family affairs. In July 1536, he set out for the city of Strasbourg with the intention of pursuing a scholarly career. A war in the region forced Calvin to make a detour to the south, so as to approach Strasbourg from Geneva. He had no intention of settling there.

Geneva was a free city at the time, having won her liberty through a revolt in 1535 against the duchy of Savoy. With support from the Swiss Protestant city of Berne, the Genevans defeated Savoy's attempt to regain control, and by the summer of 1536, Geneva proclaimed itself a republic committed to the cause of the Reformation. The religious affairs of the city, although nominally under the control of the city council, were in effect directed by William Farel and Pierre Viret. Farel recognized Calvin during his

brief stay in Geneva, and invited him to remain in Geneva and help consolidate the Reformation in that city.

Initially, things went well for Calvin. He played a prominent role in a disputation that led the neighboring city of Lausanne to accept the Reformation in September 1536. Elections to the city council—the supreme power within the new Genevan republic—increased the presence of councillors sympathetic to Farel and Calvin. Yet tensions erupted in 1538 over what both Farel and Calvin came to see as Geneva's excessive dependence upon Berne. In April of that year, the city council expelled both men from Geneva, prompting Calvin to move to Strasbourg.

During his period in Strasbourg, Calvin served as a pastor to a local French-language church at the invitation of Strasbourg's great reformer, Martin Bucer, who also introduced him to the widow who would later become Calvin's wife. The three years in Strasbourg was a productive time in Calvin's life: he managed to translate *Institutes* into French, prepare a second edition of the Latin version, and write a major commentary on Romans. In 1541, however, his exile came to an end. Calvin was invited back to Geneva to resume his program of religious reform.

From 1541 until his death in 1564, Calvin was able to pursue his program of theological reflection and application. Although Calvin is remembered primarily as a theologian and biblical commentator, his experience of the realities of public life in the cosmopolitan imperial city of Strasbourg had given him a new confidence to address the issue of Christianity in the public arena. Calvin's second Geneva period was marked by episodes of controversy (the burning of the Protestant heretic Michael Servetus was only the most notorious), disagreement with the city council, and personal unpopularity. It was also, however, a time in which Calvin's influence expanded considerably, particularly in his native France. By his death, there was a growing and powerful Calvinist presence in France, which can be seen as triggering the wars of religion in that country.

Calvin understood Christianity as a faith that engages the realities of both personal and public life. He had considerable interest in the development of an authentic Christian theology, and was well aware of the importance of issues of personal piety and spirituality. Yet his vision of the Christian faith extended far beyond the piety of a privatized faith or the cerebral conundrums of an intellectualized theology. Theology for Calvin offered a framework for engaging with public life.

A culture of free enterprise flourished in Geneva, in large part thanks to Calvin's benign attitude towards economics and finance. A comparison with Luther is instructive here. Luther's economic outlook—like his social thought in general—was heavily conditioned by the social realities of the unsophis-

ticated rural German territories he set out to reform. His was a world preoccupied with the problems of late feudal rural life, especially the tensions between peasantry and nobility. Although Luther was clearly aware of some of the economic issues of his day—such as whether money should be loaned at interest—he did not understand the issues dominating urban finance. Luther had no conception of the economic forces that were beginning to transform Germany from a feudal nation of peasant agriculturalists into a society with an emergent capitalist economy. In his treatise “On Trade and Usury,” written in the summer of 1524, Luther adopted a strongly critical attitude towards those engaged in any form of commercial activity. The fact that Luther’s economic thought was hostile to any form of capitalism largely reflects his unfamiliarity with the sophisticated world of finance then emerging in the public life of the cities.

Calvin, however, was perfectly aware of the financial realities at Geneva and their implications. Although he did not develop an “economic theory” in any comprehensive sense of the term, he appears to have been fully cognizant of basic economic principles, recognizing the productive nature of both capital and human work. He praised the division of labor for its economic benefits and the way it emphasizes human interdependence and social existence. The right of individuals to possess property, denied by the radical wing of the Reformation, Calvin upheld. He recognized that passages in the book of Deuteronomy relating to business ethics belonged to a bygone age; he refused to let the rules of a primitive Jewish agrarian society have binding force upon the progressive, modern, and urban Geneva of his time. Calvin dealt with the absolute prohibition upon lending money at interest (usury), for example, by arguing that it was merely an accommodation to the specific needs of a primitive society. Since there was no similarity between such a society and Geneva—interest is merely rent paid on capital, after all—he allowed lenders to charge a variable rate of interest. Calvin was sensitive to the pressures upon capital in a more or less free market, and believed that the ethical aims of the usury prohibition could be safeguarded by other means.

Calvin also articulated a work ethic that strongly encouraged the development of Geneva’s enterprise culture. He taught that the individual believer has a vocation to serve God in the world—in every sphere of human existence—lending a new dignity and meaning to ordinary work. Calvin agreed that the world should be treated with contempt to the extent that it is not God, and is too easily mistaken for Him; yet, it is the creation of God, to be affirmed at least to a degree. “Let believers get used to a contempt of the present life that gives rise to no hatred of it, or ingratitude towards God. . . . Something that is neither blessed nor desirable in itself can become

something good for the devout.” Christians are thus to inhabit the world with joy and gratitude, without becoming trapped within it. A degree of critical detachment must accompany Christian affirmation of the world as God’s creation and gift. Christians are to live in the world, while avoiding falling into that world, becoming immersed within and swallowed by it.

To appreciate the significance of Calvin’s work ethic, it is necessary to understand the intense distaste with which the early Christian tradition, illustrated by the monastic writers, regarded work. For Eusebius of Caesarea, the perfect Christian life was one devoted to serving God, untainted by physical labor. Those who chose to work for a living were second-rate Christians. The early monastic tradition appears to have inherited this attitude, with the result that work often came to be seen as a debasing and demeaning activity, best left to one’s social—and spiritual—inferiors. If the social patricians of ancient Rome regarded work as below their status, it has to be said that a spiritual aristocracy appears to have developed within early Christianity with equally negative and dismissive attitudes towards manual labor. Such attitudes probably reached their height during the Middle Ages.

Scholars are much divided about the spiritual status of work in the Middle Ages. The Benedictine model of monasticism, with its stress on *ora et labora*, undoubtedly attributed great dignity to manual labor, though the first duty of the monk was always the Divine Office, called his “Opus Dei.” It has been urged by some that the Benedictines, with their vast network of monastic enterprises, were in fact “the first capitalists.” However that may be, there also persisted a widespread perception in medieval Christianity that those who worked “in the world,” as distinct from monastics and clerics more generally, were engaged in a less worthy way of life and, indeed, were second-class Christians. Certainly that perception, combined with various corruptions of monasticism so caustically criticized by Erasmus and others, led Reformers such as Luther and Calvin to sharply contrast the monastic call “from the world” with the authentically Christian call “into the world.”

In this view, Christians were called to be priests to the world, purifying and sanctifying its everyday life from within. Luther stated this point succinctly when commenting on Genesis 13:13: “What seem to be secular works are actually the praise of God and represent an obedience which is well-pleasing to him.” There were no limits to this notion of calling. Luther even extolled the religious value of housework, declaring that although “it has no obvious appearance of holiness, yet these very household chores are more to be valued than all the works of monks and nuns.”

Underlying this new attitude is the notion of the vocation or “calling.” God calls his people, not

just to faith, but to express that faith in quite definite areas of life. Whereas monastic spirituality regarded vocation as a calling *out* of the world into the desert or the monastery, Luther and Calvin regarded vocation as a calling *into* the everyday world. The idea of a calling or vocation is first and foremost about being called by God, to serve Him within his world. Work was thus seen as an activity by which Christians could deepen their faith, leading it on to new qualities of commitment to God. Activity within the world, motivated, informed, and sanctioned by Christian faith, was the supreme means by which the believer could demonstrate his or her commitment and thankfulness to God. To do anything for God, and to do it well, was the fundamental hallmark of authentic Christian faith. Diligence and dedication in one's everyday life are, Calvin thought, a proper response to God.

For Calvin, God places individuals where He wants them to be, which explains Calvin's criticism of human ambition as an unwillingness to accept the sphere of action God has allocated to us. Social status is an irrelevance, a human invention of no spiritual importance; one cannot allow the human evaluation of an occupation's importance to be placed above the judgment of God who put you there. All human work is capable of "appearing truly respectable and being considered highly important in the sight of God." No occupation, no calling, is too mean or lowly to be graced by the presence of God.

The work of believers is thus seen to possess a significance that goes far beyond the visible results of that work. It is the person working, as much as the resulting work, that is significant to God. There is no distinction between spiritual and temporal, sacred and secular work. All human work, however lowly, is capable of glorifying God. Work is, quite simply, an act of praise—a potentially *productive* act of praise. Work glorifies God, it serves the common good, and it is something through which human creativity can express itself. The last two, it must be stressed, are embraced by the first. As Calvin's English follower William Perkins put it, "The true end of our lives is to do service to God in serving of man."

This insight is important in assessing certain aspects of the Reformation work ethic. Calvin, for example, weighs in strongly in support of St. Paul's injunction, "If someone does not work, then he should not eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Several modern writers have severely criticized Calvin for that view, arguing that his comments demonstrate his insensitivity to the needs of the unemployed. Calvin's primary target, however, appears to have been quite different: the French aristocrats who sought refuge in Geneva and felt that their social status placed them above the need to work. They *would* not work; for Calvin, the common human obligation is to labor in the garden of the Lord, in whatever manner is

commensurate with one's God-given gifts and abilities on the one hand, and the needs of the situation on the other. The common obligation to work is the great social leveler, a reminder that all human beings are created equal by God.

In many ways, Calvin's work ethic can be seen as a development of Paul's injunction to the Corinthian Christians: "Each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him" (1 Corinthians 7:17). Calvin emphasized that the everyday activity of ordinary Christians has deep religious significance. The English poet George Herbert expressed this insight eloquently:

Teach me, my God and King,
In all things thee to see;
And what I do in anything
To do it as for thee.

A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine;
Who sweeps a room, as for thy laws,
Makes that and the action fine.

So who can learn from Calvin today? It is ironic that those who perhaps are most willing to listen to Calvin are also those who have most to learn from him. American evangelicalism is a complex phenomenon, and I have no wish to misrepresent it through simplification. However, it is fair to say that most evangelicals—and I write as one who gladly and positively identifies with this movement—regard the sixteenth-century Reformation as a period of heroic renewal of the Christian faith and triumphant rediscovery of the meaning of Scripture.

Yet many American evangelicals are ambivalent about engaging—as Calvin urged—with social and political matters. To become involved in such affairs is, they fear, to compromise the integrity of one's faith, to risk contamination by the sin of the world. Faith is a private matter, and is best kept that way. In making these observations, I must stress that I am not dismissing them; they represent serious concerns that reflect a perceptive appreciation of what can all too easily happen through uncritical immersion in the affairs of the world.

Calvin encourages believers to get involved—to be salt in the world. For Calvin, it is entirely possible to maintain integrity of faith while injecting a Christian presence and influence within society. This vision of a Christian society held a powerful appeal to our forebears: John Winthrop (1588-1649), the first Puritan governor of Massachusetts, even sought to build on the basis of the gospel a Christian civilization in the New World. Perhaps that vision lies beyond our reach—but it remains a challenge and stimulus to our thinking.

We can see the importance of this vision in Carl Henry's critique of fundamentalism in the late 1940s.

Henry argued that fundamentalists did not present Christianity as a worldview, with a distinctive social vision, but chose to concentrate on personal conversion, only one aspect of the Christian proclamation. As a result, they presented an impoverished and reduced gospel to the world, radically defective in its social vision. Fundamentalism was too otherworldly and anti-intellectual to gain a hearing amongst the educated public, and was unwilling to concern itself with exploring how Christianity related to culture and social life in general. The seventy-five pages of Henry's *Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (1947)—what Dirk Jellema labeled the “manifesto of neo-evangelicalism”—sounded a clarion call for cultural engagement on the part of evangelicals. Fundamentalism had totally failed to turn back the rising forces of modernism, achieving no significant impact upon the world of its day, because it failed to

address the social problems of its time. Henry's argument was unquestionably of major importance in encouraging a new generation of evangelicals to engage society, rather than withdraw into isolated, defensive, and inward-looking enclaves.

Calvin reminds his modern-day successors that while such engagement runs many risks, it is essential nonetheless if Christians are to be the leaven where leavening is most needed. It is not merely evangelicals who need to hear this counsel. If Christianity is to remain a positive force and influence in American public life, all Christians need to be present within that life, as salt and light. To remain safely behind the barricades may seem more secure, and a lot less risky—but it denies us any chance of reforming, renewing, and recalling our culture. The legacy of John Calvin invites us to engage our world, and instructs us in how to do so with integrity. ^[1]

Epitaph

Chiseled on the great stone
Before tomb without bone:

He was a good man but
Weak administration
Of his father's estate
A disgrace, a scandal;
He lent without profit
Coins imaged with Caesar,
Often gave outright from
Stores of oil and grain,
Let poor and puny use
The shacks and fields for free,
Latecomers and lazy
Paid same as diligent,
Made forgive and forget
Requisites for foremen,
Mistreating enemies
Second capital crime,
Expecting change with time.

With the father away
Holdings began to wane;
Son's policies could not
Survive Jerusalem,
Much less Roman Empire;
So not without reason
Some rascals killed the son,
Each hoping to be one
Of those named to succeed.

T. Kretz

Letter from Budapest

Richard Grenier

Murderous cruise missiles crash into factories, office buildings, farm houses, all just across the border in Serbia, while on the other side of the frontier twelve million Hungarians stare apprehensively into their television sets thinking, "There but for the grace of God goes Hungary."

Yet, curiously for those who have never experienced it, the presence nearby of war and destruction seems to add for Budapest a positive zest for living. Theaters and concert halls are full. Churches are full. Admitted to NATO only some two weeks before the Atlantic alliance began its massive bombing of Serbia in retaliation for Slobodan Milosevic's vicious treatment of Kosovo, Hungary is in a mood of veritable rejoicing. After hundreds of years of brutalization by tyrannies of one sort or another from both East and West—from the Huns and Turks to the repressive regimes installed by both Hitler and Stalin—Hungary is at last a bona fide and fully recognized member of the democratic West. At its current rate of economic expansion, moreover, Hungary in perhaps three years will become a member of the European Union, a development which scarcely over a decade ago would have seemed unthinkable for this former Warsaw Pact member.

With the NATO bombing of Serbia in its fourth week and facing the prospect of failure, General William Odom, former director of the U.S. National Security Agency, published an essay in the *Wall Street Journal* urging the ground invasion of Serbia via Hungary: a high-speed armored ground assault charging down through open country in Hungary to attack Serbia from the north while on its southern flank the country is fighting assorted anti-Serbian forces and pockets of the Kosovo Liberation

Army. Macedonia is at this writing the base of more than 20,000 NATO troops, poised for a "permissive" entry into Serbia from the south, and NATO is starting to add troops into Albania to constitute a full-fledged southern front. As opposed to mountainous Serbia, much of Hungary is quite flat—providing the same "corridor" that the German army swept down through in two weeks in World War II on its way to Serbia (where it bogged down). Some have estimated that Gen. Odom's grand assault on Serbia would require a force of not 20,000, but 200,000, which, pouring into Serbia in a distinctly "non-permissive" manner from both north and south, should bring Milosevic to heel. On the twelfth day of bombing Gen. Odom was joined in his demand for a NATO ground attack on Serbia from Hungary by columnist George Will and by James Woolsey, former Director of Central Intelligence.

An invasion force in the hundreds of thousands, followed by all kinds of armor and military supplies, would certainly transform the idyllic Hungary I have been traveling through, and every single one of the scores of Hungarians I met during my journey expressed horror at the prospect. In the first public-opinion poll taken of the Hungarian population, some 40 percent are opposed to the NATO air strikes against Serbia, and one can imagine the opposition to a ground invasion moving through Hungary itself. Support would be even further diminished by the presence in northern Serbia of 300,000 ethnic Hungarians—whose regional capital, Novi Sad, has seen its bridges and fuel depots blasted since the start of the air campaign. Hungary has nonetheless opened its airspace to NATO warplanes, and has allowed free access to its military facilities, including the air base at Taszar, used at present as a transfer point to the Balkans for troops and supplies coming from Germany.

For much of the last thousand years, Hungary has been a battleground between East and West, and,

RICHARD GRENIER is a writer living in Washington, D.C. His most recent book is *Capturing the Culture: Film, Art, and Politics*.

though pro-Western and contemptuous of Slobodan Milosevic, it is nevertheless sick of the struggle. Hungary is now a loyal member of NATO, of course, and if called upon to provide a "corridor" through which NATO ground forces can reach Serbia, I suspect it will oblige. But with remarkably little enthusiasm. Gen. Odom has suggested that a NATO occupying force might have to remain in Serbia (with support troops doubtless in Hungary) for "decades," a bitter pill since Soviet troops left Hungary not so long ago. Hungarians will remind you that the fiercest military rising against Moscow during the entire Soviet imperium was carried out in 1956 by Hungary. Although the country at present is in a state of historically unprecedented prosperity, here and there in Budapest a building pockmarked by artillery (German, Soviet from World War II, or Soviet from the 1956 rising) recalls the country's unhappy past.

Budapest is one of the world's most visually dramatic capitals. Now home to some two million ethnically diverse citizens, the city is divided in two by the majestic Danube, flowing its muddy way—only occasionally blue—southwards. From the hilly side of the city, Buda, one has a most remarkable panoramic view of the other side of the Danube, Pest, double in size and completely flat. For centuries the two parts of the city were entirely separate; they were joined only 125 years ago to form the modern metropolis.

Buda is a tourist's delight: cobblestone streets, Roman ruins, castles converted into museums, dazzling views, catacombs, and surely one of the most original Hilton hotels anywhere in the world—incorporating the ruins of a medieval Dominican church. History is everywhere. Buda in the fifteenth century was one of the glories of the Western world. In succeeding centuries it underwent brutal sieges, first by Turks, then Austrians, then Nazi Germans. At the end of World War II, in January 1945, Hitler's army held out in Budapest for a month—the 31st siege in the city's history.

Pest, which seen from the vantage point of the "Fisherman's Bastion" atop Castle Hill stretches for miles, is very much an energized, modern city. Street graffiti artists have been at work on much of the wall space, and Budapest citizens—clad these days more often than not in jeans and leisure garb—stroll along, cell phones clutched to their ears. On fair days the city's cafes are filled, in a style much like that of Paris or Rome. Pedestrian walkways in the city center, a few blocks from the Danube, boast signs of Gianni Versace, Estée Lauder, Giorgio Armani, as well as foreign-language bookshops. But ubiquitous McDonald's, Burger Kings, and neon signs promoting Coca Cola and Pepsi do not efface the city's inimitable character.

A century ago, in 1896, Hungarians celebrated with great ceremony the 1,000th anniversary of the

founding of their nation. "Pannonia," as this part of Europe was known in Roman times, was the capital of Attila the Hun. Hungarian myth and legend are full of Attila, who, having stormed and pillaged Rome, retreated to a border settlement in present-day Hungary. Modern Hungarians, myth notwithstanding, are not descendants of the ancient Huns. Dominant in the ethnic composition of modern-day Hungary are in fact another nomadic Eastern people, the Magyars (the word meaning "Hungarian" in modern Hungarian). The Magyars settled in the Carpathian Basin at the end of the ninth century, almost two hundred years before the Normans conquered England in 1066. Saint Istvan (Stephen), descendant of Arpad who led an alliance of conquering tribes from the East, was crowned the first Christian king of Hungary with a crown sent from Rome for the purpose by the Pope. King Stephen organized his kingdom quickly and efficiently and was subsequently canonized. Hungary rapidly became a leader of Christian Europe, for centuries fighting to hold back the waves of pagan nomads attacking from the East.

During the Renaissance and Reformation the kingdom of Hungary finally fell—not to any pagan tribe, but to the Turk—and for 150 years, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Hungary languished under Ottoman rule. But when the yoke of Istanbul was finally thrown off, and when the wars of religion between Catholic and Protestant also came to an end, Hungary—curiously for this part of the world—was left with a thriving Protestant community. Following the Reformation, Roman authority and the Catholic faith were firmly reestablished in neighboring Austria, yet to this day magnificent Protestant churches survive all over Hungary—and are full on Sunday. Budapest has not one but two splendid Protestant churches, and one of them, in the center of Budapest, the "Calvinist" church, presides over what is plainly marked by a street sign as "Calvin Square." Hungary, before Hitler, was also one of the centers of world Jewry, Jews accounting for 5 percent of the country's population. There are synagogues that remain and are still open.

Those familiar with the tragic history of the Holocaust will recall that Admiral Miklos Horthy, authoritarian ruler of Hungary under Hitler, was quite reluctant to cooperate with the Nazis in their anti-Semitic program. Although most citizens of the Allied countries tend to assume Horthy and Hungary were wholehearted allies of the Nazis, hostility between Hitler and the Hungarians was such that in March 1944 a German army invaded Hungary and arrested its leaders. At war's end Hungary held a war crimes trial and, just like France, executed the country's leading Nazi collaborators. Photographs of Hungary's postwar trials and hangings are on conspicuous and permanent display in Budapest's National History Museum.

No Hungarians were hanged for collaborating

with the Soviets, of course, but Budapest has hit on a rather whimsical way of remembering the Soviet occupation. All the pious pro-Communist statues that the Soviets erected in Hungary—Marx, Lenin, Stalin, heroic Soviet soldiers, Bela Kun (leader of a Soviet-style revolutionary regime that ruled Hungary for six months in 1919 following the Bolshevik victory in Russia)—have been gathered together in a morgue-like place Budapest residents refer to as “Statue Park.” Bela Kun himself, having fled to the Soviet Union, disappeared in the Moscow purges of the 1930s and was only rehabilitated after Stalin’s death. With only 4 percent of Hungarians now voting Communist, “Statue Park” in present-day Budapest has a peculiarly ironic effect.

In honor of a national culture that has survived conquest after conquest and rather amazingly still thrives today, Hungarians this year are celebrating, not the future, but their distinguished past, with a huge assemblage of artistic events—concerts, operas, art shows, ballets—all under the title “Farewell to the XXth Century.”

Enthusiastic crowds fill performances at almost every one of Budapest’s forty theaters. The city is swamped by tourists from Austria and Germany and, for those who don’t understand Hungarian (a language not related to any other European language than Finnish), German over-titles are often projected at the top of a theater’s proscenium arch, giving not only the summary of words to operas and plays, but the names of every movement of a musical composition.

Driving about today’s Budapest, one is constantly reminded of what are still felt to be this former imperial city’s greatest days in the modern period—what the French call *La Belle Epoque*—the decades about one hundred years ago, when Budapest was the fastest growing city in Europe, and one of the largest and richest cities in the world. It had at the time the world’s largest stock exchange, its grandest parliament building, and continental Europe’s first underground rail system (ahead even of New York, which did not yet have the subway). Budapest had a bustling, cosmopolitan, commercial sector. Hungary was at the time three times its present size, and included much of present-day Romania, Slovakia, Croatia, and southern Poland. A large portion of Budapest’s population consisted of families from the non-Hungarian provinces, and as a whole the country’s folkways were so exotic, with traces of oriental ancestry (and its language being indisputably Asian), that in Europe Hungary was conventionally thought of as having one foot in the West and one foot in East.

It was in any case Europe’s great pleasure capital, with a flourishing high culture—literature, theater, art—and, on the wicked end of the spectrum, an abundance of high-class brothels, gambling dens, casinos, and race tracks. A school of modern art that

left its mark on an extraordinary number of wonderful Budapest buildings and dates from the end of the nineteenth century is called, in the West, “Art Nouveau” and, in Hungary (eccentrically), “Secession Art.” To this day among the ornaments of Budapest is its mass of “Secession” art and architecture—with baroque elements far more florid than Art Nouveau in the West. The rich succession of the country’s national styles, including Moorish, was celebrated in Budapest with a renowned exposition a century ago, and is being recalled this year by the city’s splendid exhibitions and performances in its “Farewell to the XXth Century.”

When, talking to a Hungarian friend, one hears a reference to a great defeat for Hungary, or, by contrast, the beating back of an invader, it is not always clear which invader the Hungarian friend is talking about. The Mongols, terrible people, were beaten back (or simply withdrew) in 1242, but Hungarian armies were utterly defeated by the Turks in 1526. Turkish occupation of the country lasted for 150 years, and came to an end only when the Turks were conquered by Austria’s Hapsburgs in 1686. After failed earlier efforts, the Hungarians revolted against Hapsburg rule in 1848 (a year when there were revolutions all over Europe), and this time they succeeded, the whole business ending in the “Great Austro-Hungarian Compromise” of 1867.

The Compromise led to Hungary being semi-independent, a curious situation lasting until Woodrow Wilson and the Treaty of Versailles—according to which Hungary achieved complete independence but lost two-thirds of its territory. (Every one I talked to in Budapest had heard of Monica Lewinsky, incidentally, but the Scarlet Woman most deeply engraved on Hungarian national memory is French Premier Georges Clemenceau’s daughter-in-law, a Hungarian and an extreme Hungarian nationalist. Explain it as you will, but according to every Hungarian I encountered, Clemenceau quite hated his outspoken daughter-in-law and punished Hungary in consequence. It’s hard for an outsider not to have some reservations about this account, but it is widely held there.)

The political alignments of Hungary from the mid-nineteenth century to the present are more familiar to the West than the period when Hungary was struggling with Turks or even Austrians. From 1867 to the end of World War I the country was free and independent, but had the misfortune in World War I of allying itself with the “Central Powers” (Germany, Austria, and the Ottoman Empire). With the rise of Hitler in Germany, Hungary was once again on the wrong side. And after World War II it was yet again occupied by an anti-democratic power, though this time not by an ally of its own choosing, but by the Soviet Union. Having been so often unfortunate in its allies, Hungary seems thoroughly pre-

pared to sit out the present conflict in Yugoslavia if this can be done without imperiling its hard-won new position as a "Western" power.

And a cosmopolitan power. In an age when nations are fragmenting—with some thirty-five civil wars underway over the face of the globe and cultural hatreds dormant sometimes for centuries now reawakening—Hungary seems to display a truly remarkable degree of cosmopolitan tolerance. Catholic cathedrals, Protestant churches, Greek Orthodox churches, and Jewish synagogues jostle each other on the streets. Gypsies (although not always popular) swarm in certain districts. Hungarian schoolchildren consistently get the highest grades of any Western country on international tests, particularly in the sciences. The country's musical culture flourishes, with Hungary's Bela Bartok considered by some to be modern music's greatest composer. International

stars come to Budapest to perform, from Russian cellist Misha Maisky playing Dvorak at the Budapest Opera, to Germany's Kurt Masur conducting the London Philharmonic's performance of Bruckner at the Budapest Convention Center. The Budapest Synagogue, Europe's biggest and grandest, where Franz Liszt once played the organ, has a performance of Richard Nanes' *Hebraic Lament*. Audiences reward all these performances with huge ovations.

Richard Strauss reworked Sophocles' *Electra* into an opera. Since Strauss' time, prosperity and popular democracy have come to Hungary: a Hungarian theater company now performs the Sophocles-Strauss *Electra* at the Danube Shopping Mall, while people continue to shop, or to ice skate at the mall's indoor rink. So Hungary offers us ice skating to Sophocles. This surely is cosmopolitan. E1

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once in the operating theatre
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well almost dead
in a Hawaiian shirt blessed with flowers
streaming, his hands all wet with papaya juice
(he was stabbed, in a restaurant)
he opened his eyes and looked straight at her
“My name is Pablo Chanto” he said
and he closed his eyes and she could hear
as they opened his chest
and tried to get his breath
fishes leaving the sunk reef
opening the carafes of their throats
and swallowing wine out of the reeds
like bubbles reaching hands
in streams out of his mouth
at the bottom of the ocean in a galleon,
fish swimming in streams out of his chest
and the flowers on the gurney
in his shirt, flowers soaked and billowing
with red all whisper as she reaches
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Books In Review

Which Conservatism?

A CASE FOR CONSERVATISM. By JOHN KEKES. *Cornell University Press*. 239 pp. \$29.95.

Reviewed by Brian C. Anderson

IN HIS IMPORTANT 1997 book *Against Liberalism*, the moral philosopher John Kekes exposed the staggering incoherence of contemporary Anglo-American liberal theory—the dominant form of political and moral thought taught in most American universities today. For Kekes, the radical egalitarianism and moral vacuity of leading liberal thinkers John Rawls and Ronald Dworkin made their work irrelevant at best, and deeply pernicious to the extent that it influenced law and policy, so removed was it from human nature or any recognizable social world. But *Against Liberalism* was a ruthless demolition job, and Kekes only sketched his suggested alternative to liberalism: a pluralist and historically minded conservatism. *A Case for Conservatism* offers a systematic presentation of that alternative, and it's everything we've come to expect from Kekes: morally serious, argumentative, and filled with good sense. It's also troubling, as we shall see.

The central concern of conservatism, Kekes explains, is with political arrangements that create the conditions for people to live good lives. Those conditions include, but are not limited to, civility, equality, freedom, a healthy environment, justice, order, peace, prosperity,

BRIAN C. ANDERSON is Senior Editor of *City Journal*, author of *Raymond Aron: The Recovery of the Political*, and editor of a new collection of Michael Novak's social and political writings, *On Cultivating Liberty*, just out from Rowman & Littlefield.

rights, security, toleration, and welfare. Conservatives, unlike liberals or socialists, are sensitive to the fragility of political arrangements conducive to good lives, and look to history for lessons on how to nourish and protect them. As Kekes tells it, conservative political morality, growing out of this historical reflection, is based on four components: skepticism, pluralism, traditionalism, and pessimism. Each component is an Aristotelian mean between two rejected alternatives.

TAKE SKEPTICISM FIRST. Kekes stresses that conservative skepticism encourages a healthy distrust of the two forms "the nightmare of reason" may take: the rationalist dream of reconstructing the human world on the basis of "the latest metaphysical or utopian certainties," and the "fideist" spurning of reason in favor of irrational enthusiasms, whether religious or nationalist in inspiration. Kekes' skepticism is close to that of Raymond Aron in *Opium of the Intellectuals*, and leads conservatives "to be cautious in accepting reasons, to want reasons to be concrete, tried, and true, attested to by experience, without pretending to a quixotic pose of the wholesale rejection of the effort to be as reasonable as possible." In a century torn by rationalist and irrationalist political experiments that exacted an incalculable toll in human suffering, a skeptical attitude—toward political arrangements, anyway—is surely a reasonable one if we care at all about human well-being.

Pluralism is the second component of conservative political morality. Kekes is indebted to Isaiah Berlin, the political philosopher who returned repeatedly to the problem posed by the incommensurability of human goods. Berlin argued that a society cannot maximize all good things all at once: there are always trade-offs between, say, liberty and equality or privacy and public spirit. Kekes agrees, and sees pluralism as a via media between absolutism and relativism. Absolutists declare that

there is but one good form that all lives must struggle to approximate; relativists proclaim that good lives are just what each society, or perhaps each individual, say they are. Pluralists, Kekes suggests, are more sensibly awake to the variety of political arrangements, conditions, traditions, and conceptions of the good life that human nature legitimately allows. But they are aware, too, that that variety isn't infinite, and that a society that abets prostitution or venality isn't a decent one.

Conservatives are traditionalists, Kekes avers. Like Alasdair MacIntyre and Michael Oakshott, Kekes defends traditions because they carry tacit knowledge, various and sundry excellences, and resources for building meaningful lives. Where the well of tradition runs dry, human impoverishment inexorably follows; a strong society will harbor many traditions. A social world thick with traditions, Kekes believes, is better than a liberal one devoted to individual autonomy, since autonomy by itself leaves us sad and empty. As the French philosopher Pierre Manent puts it, what's the worth of choice if choice is all there is? But a social world thick with traditions is also better than one where social authority crushes traditions into authorized shapes, as the Soviet Union once crushed civil society with all the weight its merciless centralized power could muster.

The final component of conservative political morality, on Kekes' view, is pessimism. Pessimism leads conservatives to reject the "Enlightenment Faith" in human perfectibility shared by liberals and socialists. Evil and contingency stain all human affairs, as should be clear to anyone who looks out the window or in the mirror. Yet conservatives don't go to the opposite extreme of viewing human nature as irredeemably corrupt. Even thoroughly evil societies witness acts of decency, generosity, and sacrifice, as the Maximilian Kolbes and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyns of the twentieth century attest. Pessimism acknowledges both angel and brute

in man's permanent constitution.

THESE FOUR COMPONENTS of conservative political morality—skepticism, pluralism, traditionalism, and pessimism—apply flexibly to three different levels of the human world, Kekes contends. The universal level refers to certain minimal constants of human physiology, psychology, and sociality that all good societies must honor. If political arrangements make famine more likely, or cause people to despair of the future, or generate mistrust and worse among neighbors, then conservatives must condemn them. But on the social level, pluralism holds: as between an authoritarian but prosperous and orderly society and a quarrelsome and liberty-loving society, who is to say which is better? Finally, on the individual level, there are many different ways of living good lives, and conservatives should tolerate, though not necessarily respect, as much variety as is compatible with social stability.

Much of this is indisputably wise, and conservatives of any stripe will have no hesitancy in endorsing it. But I have several criticisms. First, Kekes' case is for a post-religious conservatism. He betrays a secularist bias that makes him unreasonably suspicious of religious conservatives, whom he dismisses as absolutists, though tellingly never any by name. That bias is strikingly displayed in a passage relatively late in the book when Kekes, to make a case for the distinction between toleration and respect, asks an "unsympathetic" reader what the appropriate response should be to "racists, anti-Semites, creationists, pedophiles, pornographers, and so forth, who live according to their beliefs without violating any required convention." Now, one might have reservations about strict creationism, but are creationists really as morally offensive as racists and pedophiles? Elsewhere, Kekes proclaims without argument that we now know that chastity isn't a virtue. But how does Kekes know this? Whatever he thinks of Chris-

tian teaching, how can he be sure, as the Western world confronts escalating rates of adolescent venereal disease, millions of abortions, and sexually jaded fifteen-year-olds, that chastity is atavistic?

As a result of his post-religious theoretical position, Kekes develops a minimalist view of universal human nature that is too limited. Is an argument for the moral superiority of the traditional family, or for the morally problematic nature of certain sexual practices, illegitimately absolutist? In Kekes' conservative pluralism, it seems so. Moral claims of this kind have no claim to be universal. At best, Kekes grants them a second-order status as part of a particular tradition, implying that a Christian who lived his life in the light of the Second Coming and who honored the theological virtues of the New Testament, or a Jew who embraced the Judaic ethics of divine law, couldn't be a conservative—they would be (presumably dangerous) absolutists.

BUT ONE CAN be a Christian or a Jew, argue for the universal truth of one's faith and its moral precepts, and still tolerate human practices that fall short of the ideal or admit the often ambiguous, conflictual, and uncertain nature of moral life. The idea of prudential judgment has its place in the armory of political thought to serve exactly this purpose. The absence of a discussion of prudence in *A Case for Conservatism* makes Kekes' category of absolutism an odd caricature—if I've understood him correctly, the ranks of absolutists would include, among others, Thomas Aquinas, Solzhenitsyn, and Pope John Paul II.

Kekes is right to emphasize the complexity of the moral world and the inescapability of tragic conflict, just as he is correct to stress the importance of history. But *A Case for Conservatism* is curiously lacking in the kind of thick description of moral life for which a satisfying defense of a conservative political morality cries out. It is, moreover, nearly bereft of historical examples. Kekes' coldly logical approach

worked well in *Against Liberalism*, where the object was to unpack the absurdity and contradictions of liberal theory; here, where the purpose is to show the superiority of conservatism, it's a liability. Kekes argues that conservatives have a greater feel for the texture of real life than do liberals, but he does not exemplify that in this book.

Kekes is an admirable iconoclast in the stultifying universe of post-analytic moral and political philosophy, where conservatives, even of Kekes' secular stripe, are a rarity. If *A Case for Conservatism* is less successful than its companion volume *Against Liberalism*, it is still a valuable contribution to political theory: conservatives should indeed be skeptical of every attempt to solve the political problem once and for all; they should indeed be pluralists, open to the varieties of human flourishing, at least up to a point; they should indeed respect and nourish traditions; they should indeed be reasonably pessimistic about human nature, without surrendering to hopelessness. Kekes' limits—his deafness to faith, his too limited understanding of human universality, his abstractness—shouldn't deter us from wrestling with these and other insights in this challenging work.

God . . . Sort Of

THE FIFTH MIRACLE: THE SEARCH FOR THE ORIGIN AND MEANING OF LIFE. By PAUL DAVIES. *Simon & Schuster*. 400 pp. \$25.

Reviewed by Michael J. Behe

PAUL DAVIES should need little introduction to readers of FIRST THINGS. A theoretical physicist and prolific author, he won the 1995 Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion. As the title of the address he gave in receiving the award indicates—"Physics and the Mind of God" (FT, August/September 1995)—he does not hesitate to think about the Deeper Meaning of his

MICHAEL J. BEHE is Professor of Biochemistry at Lehigh University.

science. The deeper meaning, however, turns out to be a pretty simple proposition: our universe exhibits the remarkably narrow range of physical conditions required for life, which makes one suspect that it was intentionally set up that way. Although straightforward, this reasoning sets off alarms in many scientists' minds. To his credit Davies ignores this peer pressure. In his Templeton Prize address he wrote:

To me, the contrived nature of physical existence is just too fantastic for me to take on board as simply a "given." It points forcefully to a deeper underlying meaning to existence. Some call it purpose, some design. These loaded words, which derive from human categories, capture only imperfectly what it is that the universe is about. But that it is about something, I have absolutely no doubt.

So far, so good. If a scientist thinks the physical evidence points to a "contrived" universe, then he should follow the data. The hitch is that Davies has definite ideas about how this design should be implemented: it ought to be restricted to the general laws of nature. "I would rather that nature take care of itself. . . . To me, the true miracle of nature is to be found in the ingenious and unswerving lawfulness of the cosmos."

Well, we all have our preferences about the way things should be. A professional scientist, however, is supposed to put aside personal biases as much as possible and let the facts speak for themselves. Admittedly, Davies comes by his preference for a self-sufficient universe honestly: as a theoretical physicist, general laws are what he studies. But in *The Fifth Miracle* Davies leaves behind the tidy, simple realm of physics for messy, complex biology, and grapples with the riddle of the origin of life. Unfortunately, he attempts to fit square pegs of data into the round holes of his theory, and they don't quite fit.

A PRIMARY TOPIC of the book is the recent discovery of "superbugs," hardy bacteria that live miles beneath the earth's surface in temperatures over 100°C. They apparently require no sunlight because they metabolize minerals for food and energy. These exotic creatures have provoked speculation that life may exist in niches in the solar system once thought to be hopelessly sterile, such as the interior of Europa, a moon of Jupiter.

Some superbugs are so tough that they might survive a trip through outer space (say from Earth to Mars) when blasted off a planet by an asteroid collision. Davies thinks that life might even have spread around the universe by hitchhiking on meteors. Kicked up by an impact, rocks carrying frozen superbugs in suspended animation might travel for billions of years until falling onto some hospitable planet, light years from home. (Davies rather naively assumes that once microbial life reached another planet, Darwinian evolution would take over and produce more interesting life forms.)

This scenario can be granted for purposes of argument. The problem is that, as Davies realizes, it doesn't explain the origin of life—where the very first cell came from—so it has "zero philosophical significance." At best it might say something about the early natural history of life.

What Davies thinks would have deep significance is the discovery of life that had arisen independently, as evidenced by alien biochemistry. His reasoning goes something like this: one accidental origin of life would be really tough, so two independent origins would be essentially impossible, and would show that life was intended in a "biofriendly universe." Davies is clearly excited at the prospect of truly alien life, but I doubt its discovery would change many minds. The fact is, from all we know of physics and chemistry, one undirected origin of life already looks impossible. Those folks who aren't impressed with one origin are unlikely to be impressed by two.

The problems facing an undirected and purely chemical origin of life have, of course, been reviewed before, and Davies, outside his area of expertise, brings nothing fundamentally new to the discussion. He remarks that "When I set out to write this book, I was convinced that science was close to wrapping up the mystery of life's origin." But if he had read *The Mystery of Life's Origin* by Charles Thaxton, or *Origins* by Robert Shapiro, or even pertinent *Scientific American* articles, he might have started with a clearer picture of the relentless difficulties. Some of the unresolved questions that Davies rediscovers include the following: Amino acids can be made under prebiotic conditions, but a whole lot of interfering chemicals get made too, so how does one separate the wheat from the chaff? RNA would be a possible candidate to begin life, but since RNA is a whole lot harder to make than proteins, where would it have come from? The genetic code mediates between the two languages of life—proteins and nucleic acids—but how do mindless processes set up "codes" and "languages"?

Like everyone else, Davies has no answers to these problems, so he passes on to the reader whatever speculation has been floated. He recounts the suggestion by Carl Woese that the code assignments and the translation mechanism evolved together: "Initially there was only a rough-and-ready code, and the translation process was very sloppy." More likely that the thinking is very sloppy. Evolving code assignments together with the translation apparatus is like pulling oneself up by one's bootstraps, instead of all at once, a little bit on the right side then a little on the left. Davies also cites a recent paper that compares the genetic code to energy levels of atomic nuclei, but only to concede that the "correspondences may be purely coincidental." He even trots out Sidney Fox's proteinoids and Cairns-Smith's clay crystal life—ideas that are fifteen to twenty-five years old and have led nowhere.

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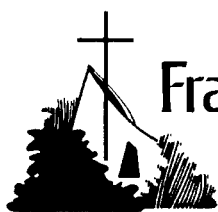
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But Davies doesn't really believe any of these conjectures himself. Early in the book he says he has now concluded that life's origin is indeed mysterious: "This gulf in understanding is not merely ignorance about certain technical details, it is a major lacuna. . . . My personal belief, for what it is worth, is that a fully satisfactory theory of the origin of life demands some radically new ideas."

USING LANGUAGE reminiscent of William A. Dembski (see "Science and Design," FT, October 1998) he writes that "Living organisms are mysterious not for their complexity per se, but for their tightly specified complexity. . . . In short, how did meaningful information emerge spontaneously from incoherent junk?"

As a matter of principle Davies balks at the obvious hypothesis of specific design. "Science takes as its starting point the assumption that life wasn't made by a god or supernatural being; it happened unaided and spontaneously, as a natural process." The notion of God pushing molecules around strikes him as distasteful. But it would pass muster with science, he thinks, for God (or whoever it is—Davies doesn't like the word "God") to make "biofriendly laws" at the beginning and then butt out, allowing life to develop on its own. So from his perspective the key is to find a natural law or laws that would produce life.

This limitation leads Davies into contradictions. He explicitly says that laws cannot contain the recipe for life because laws are "information-poor" while life is "information-rich."

Can [specified complexity] be the guaranteed product of a deterministic, mechanical, law-like process, like a primordial soup left to the mercy of familiar laws of physics and chemistry? No, it couldn't. No known law of nature could achieve this.

NONETHELESS, boxed in by his pre-suppositions, he proposes that there may be a new type of "law," an

information-generating law for which we have no evidence. He thinks the law might be something along the lines of Stuart Kauffman's complexity theory, where systems can self-organize. Davies acknowledges that Kauffman's ideas have met with considerable skepticism and have little evidence to support them. He also insightfully points out that with Kauffman's ideas there is "a deeper problem of a conceptual nature." "Life is actually *not* an example of self-organization. Life is in fact *specified*—i.e., genetically directed—organization." Still, and without countering his own objections, in the end he declares that complexity theory à la Kauffman might be the way to go. One gets the feeling that he simply needed a stopping point.

The bottom line is that life's origin and meaning remain as elusive as ever, at least within the (semi-) naturalistic framework of Paul Davies. Yet his struggle to write a book that sticks to a general-law framework, even while marveling at life's extravagant information content, makes *The Fifth Miracle* a valuable and cautionary example of blinkered thought in action.

The (Very) Last Word

THE LAST WORD. By THOMAS NAGEL. Oxford University Press. 147 pp. \$19.95.

Reviewed by Gilbert Meilaender

HOW REFRESHING and intellectually stimulating it is to read a philosopher—and one as smart as Thomas Nagel—say a favorable word on behalf of Descartes. In a time when "Cartesian" has almost become a pejorative term, Nagel invites us to have second thoughts.

He does so in order to raise doubts about a form of subjectivism that has, in his view, given rise to the "extreme intellectual laziness of

contemporary culture" and "a refusal to take seriously, as anything other than first-person avowals, the objective arguments of others." He himself, by contrast, holds the view that "the last word in philosophical disputes about the objectivity of any form of thought must lie in some unqualified thoughts about how things are." To some extent

Nagel here returns to ground he has already covered in *The View from Nowhere*, but, as he recognizes, the questions that concern him are ones that we never simply settle once and for all.

Subjectivism of the sort criticized by Nagel teaches that we cannot possibly have or form beliefs about any order independent

PHILEMON'S PROBLEM

A Theology of Grace

James Tunstead Burtchaell



PHILEMON was a wealthy Christian whose slave Onesimus went off in search of freedom, met and listened to Paul, and joined the church. But instead of being given a new life of his own, Onesimus was sent back to an aggrieved master with no protection but Paul's brief Letter to Philemon. Paul never asked Philemon to free his slave. Instead, he admonished him to take Onesimus back — only now as his brother in Christ. This left both master and bondsman with a staggering problem: how could one man own another and both be brothers in Christ?

In this unique work James Tunstead Burtchaell uses the ancient story of Philemon and Onesimus as a compelling entry into modern theological reflection on the unbelievable reach of the grace and forgiveness of the Father whose Son died without disciples, rose to reconcile and transform them, and then scattered them around the world as men and women who were now also able to love those who loved them not — and transform them too.

First published twenty-five years ago and now extensively rewritten, *Philemon's Problem* tracks across the spectrum of Christian thought — from doctrine to ethics to worship. Burtchaell's provocative theology of grace demonstrates the profound insight that the Father of Jesus is not an aggrieved god in need of sacrificial appeasement but a God we are unable to alienate. Burtchaell also argues that the church's mission today, just as it was in Philemon's day, is not to offer a privileged avenue into God's favor, but to offer the privileged insight that God can have no attitude but favor.

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GILBERT MEILAENDER holds the Board of Directors Chair in Theological Ethics at Valparaiso University.

of the ordering our minds themselves impose. Our beliefs are only our point of view—grounded in habits, in shared linguistic practices, even in personal choice. Nagel does not, of course, wish to deny that this is the right way to characterize *some* of our beliefs, but he thinks it mistaken—and sometimes self-contradictory—to

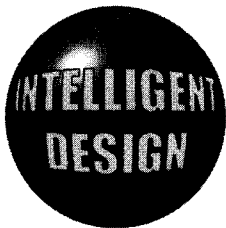
offer a subjectivist account of everything we believe. “The issue, in a nutshell, is whether the first person, singular or plural, is hiding at the bottom of everything we say or think.” In an age when “individual choice” reigns supreme in ethics and “social construction” in other realms of thought, this is a bracing, provocative, and very helpful book.

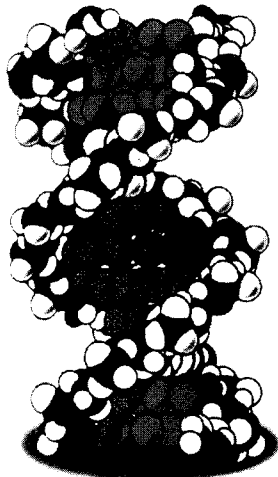
IF NOT THE first person singular or plural, what might hide “at the bottom” of our thinking and speaking? Reason, answers Nagel. My reasoning is “an attempt to turn myself into a local representative of the truth, and in action of the right.” That is, when we reason, we generalize. We look—sometimes at least—for arguments that are not limited by our particular location, by the place we happen to occupy. In reasoning, therefore, we are led “*inexorably to certain thoughts in which ‘I’ plays no part.*” Or, we might say, that in the very act of my own reasoning, I somehow get out of my skin. I am not simply trying to work out what I myself think, the implications of my own point of view. On the contrary, I am seeking what is true for all of us.

If Nagel is correct, then in reason we find a way out of the self into something that transcends us. In our very capacity to reason we discover the mystery of human self-transcendence. What Nagel is ultimately explicating, therefore, is a certain conception of what it means to be human. “What seems permanently puzzling about the phenomenon of reason, and what makes it so difficult to arrive at a satisfactory attitude toward it, is the relation it establishes between the particular and the universal. If there is such a thing as reason, it is a local activity of finite creatures that somehow enables them to make contact with universal truths, often of infinite range.” We both are and are not located. We are finite and free.

Nagel works out this conception first in chapters that treat language, logic, and science. His fundamental move at the level of logic is a very old one, which he continues to regard as a hurdle the subjectivist cannot overcome. “The familiar point that relativism is self-refuting remains valid, in spite of its familiarity.” If, for example, I argue that all of our beliefs about the world reflect perspectives that are local, I appear to be making a claim about how things really are while at the same time denying that human beings are capable of such


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general (non-local) claims.

Nagel distinguishes his view from a standard reading of Descartes by granting that reason does not carry with it any absolute certainty; it is not foundationalist in that sense, nor does it give us some set of unrevisable beliefs. Instead, he emphasizes reason's "aspiration to universality." What Descartes was really getting at is that we cannot "get outside of" all our thoughts. We cannot, that is, treat ourselves as just another object for study—as we treat cabbages, meteors, and nation-states. We can and do treat ourselves as objects of study for certain purposes, of course. We do consider whether some of our beliefs may be the result of psychological forces or cultural influence. But when we engage in such reflection we must engage in reasoning—with all that such engagement implies.

IN LANGUAGE, logic, and science Nagel finds that subjectivism leads us regularly to try to explain higher phenomena in terms of lower. Consider the logical rule of inference called *modus ponens*: Given two statements, "if p then q," and "p," we may infer "q." To try to explain the logical necessity of such a rule in terms of the linguistic practices of any community is, Nagel argues, "the attempt to explain the more fundamental in terms of the less fundamental."

Logic is probably the strongest example for Nagel's case. What of other kinds of reasoning—for example, practical reason? When we talk about what we—and others—ought or ought not to do, are we, at least sometimes, making objective claims that are not grounded in a local perspective (ours or our community's)? Nagel grants readily that the subjectivist position is more believable with respect to practical than theoretical reason. We are often tempted, for example, to replace normative judgments with psychological ones—tempted, that is, to try to show that all our moral judgments are actually sophisticated forms of rationalization. If I articulate a moral judgment about,

say, abortion, am I—in the last analysis—only reporting some facts about myself? How I happen to feel about it? What my values are? What sort of person I wish to be?

It may be harder in such matters than it is in logic to argue that the subjectivist is simply self-contradictory. But we may note—even with some comfort—how often those theoretically inclined to subjectivism may argue practical questions in ways

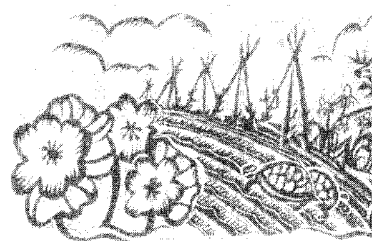
which suggest that more is at stake here than bringing the values of their own perspective into harmony with each other. Thus, in moral reasoning also, Nagel suggests that "I find within myself the universal standards that enable me to get outside of myself."

If in reason we thus find, however mysteriously, a way out of ourselves, we may wish to ponder that mystery itself just a bit: "We seem to be left

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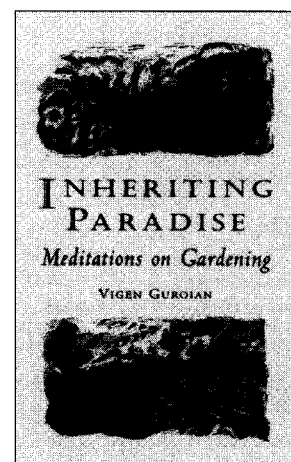
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with a question that has no imaginable answer: How is it possible for finite beings like us to think infinite thoughts?" The subjectivist seems to suggest that our problem is the following: If we finite, localized beings are the reasoners, how can reason possibly be valid? But our true problem, Nagel argues, is a different one: Given the universal validity of rea-

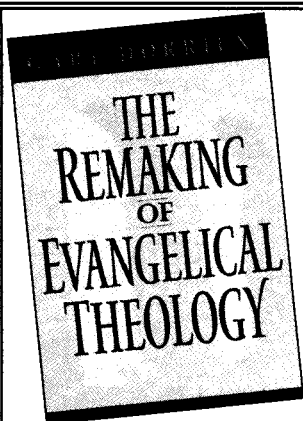
son, how is it that we finite localized beings can engage in it? There are, he says, "not many candidates for an answer to this question." The most common nonsubjectivist answer in our time has been evolutionary naturalism, which, Nagel writes, "has always seemed to me laughably inadequate." He means that it seems incredible that the appearance of

reason should be a kind of natural accident, as if through some evolutionary mechanism a mindless universe should be able to generate mind—as if what is higher should be explicable entirely in terms of what is lower. Such an account of reason cannot possibly be the last word.

IF NOT THIS answer to our question, then what? The reader suddenly realizes that the other possible answer is "the religious one" and that Nagel takes it quite seriously, even if he also says that he has never been entirely able to understand it. He is, he says, "made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers." Why, if we find his arguments up to this point generally persuasive, would we not turn to a religious answer? Perhaps surprisingly, Nagel offers a kind of psychological explanation, but it is an explanation that has about it the ring of truth.

In the standard terms of the history of philosophy, he has been arguing the side of "rationalism" against "empiricism," and that side, he notes, "has always had a more religious flavor." Even if we do not bring God into the picture, "the [rationalist's] idea of a natural sympathy between the deepest truths of nature and the deepest layers of the human mind . . . makes us more *at home* in the universe than is secularly comfortable." In short, we fear religion. "I speak from experience," he writes. "It isn't just that I don't believe in God and, naturally, hope that I'm right in my belief. It's that I hope there is no God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the universe to be like that."

There is much throughout Nagel's argument that might remind a reader of the first five chapters of C. S. Lewis' *Miracles*. And here, when Nagel turns to contemplating the religious explanation of the fact of reason, a reader might be led ineluctably to recall Lewis' description of his own conversion, "feeling . . . the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That



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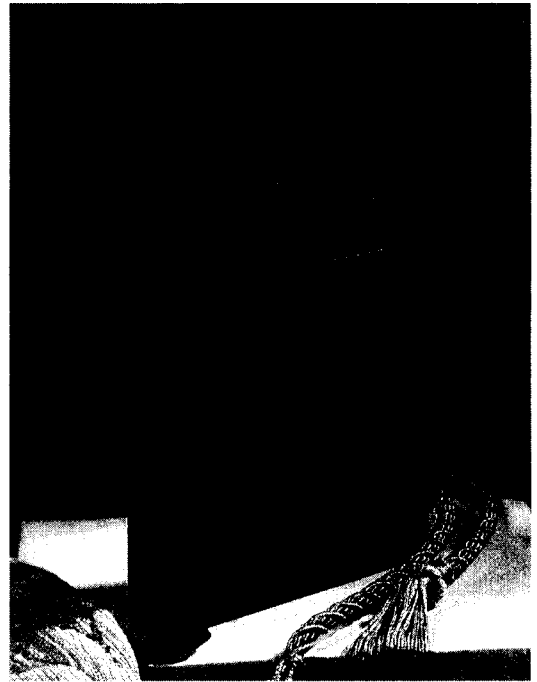
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David Hume, Jeremy Bentham,
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By Shirley Robin Letwin

By examining the thought of four seminal thinkers, Shirley Robin Letwin in *The Pursuit of Certainty* provides a brilliant record of the gradual change in the English-speaking peoples' understanding of "what sort of activity politics is." As Letwin writes, "the distinctive political issue since the eighteenth century has been whether government should do more or less." Nor, as many historians argue, did this issue arise because of the Industrial Revolution or "new social conditions [that] aggravated the problem of poverty" but, Letwin believes, because of the "profoundly personal reflection" of major thinkers, including Hume, Bentham, Mill, and Webb. David Hume, for example, believed that to "reach for perfection, to seek an ideal, is noble, but dangerous, and is therefore an activity that individuals or voluntary groups may pursue, but governments certainly should not." By the end of the nineteenth century, as Letwin observes, Beatrice Webb came to "equate the triumph of reason over passion with the rule of science over human life." Thus did the "pursuit of certainty" displace the traditional English understanding of the limitations of human nature—hence the necessity of limits to governmental power and programs. Consequently, in our time, "Politics was no longer one of several human activities and at that not a very noble one; it encompassed all of human life" in quest of philosophical "certainty" and social perfection. The Liberty Fund edition is a reprint of the original work published by Oxford in 1965.



Shirley Robin Letwin (1924–1993) was a Professor of Political and Legal Philosophy at Harvard, Cambridge, and the London School of Economics.

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which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England."

Nagel, of course, has not taken such a step, but in understanding the issue as one not only of intellect but of will, he sees something very important indeed. Moreover, the fear of religion, which he thinks is widely shared, "has large and often pernicious consequences for modern intellectual life." Relativism and subjectivism are not, then, simply philosophical problems. They are also—and perhaps even primarily—moral problems. We do not want to bend the knee.

A striking argument indeed. And not one for religious folk simply to seize upon with glee. For we ourselves ought to be able to understand quite well Nagel's point here. If

there really is a "last word" about the truth of things, a "logos" that binds the cosmos together in a system that is both knowable and mysterious, then Nagel's understanding of reason as an "aspiration to universality" is a kind of natural piety. Perhaps no more than that is possible unless and until that last word becomes personal, becomes for us the last (or, also, first) speaker who addresses us—as Barth put it, "the final word of the original chairman."

The Elliptical Exodus

THE HIDDEN BOOK IN THE BIBLE.
By RICHARD ELLIOTT FRIEDMAN.
HarperCollins. 402 pp. \$25.

Reviewed by Gary A. Anderson

I HAVE USED Richard Friedman's best-selling book on source-criticism, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, in

my introductory course for several years. Unlike most introductions to the problem of the Bible's sources, Friedman's makes the work of several generations of biblical scholars come alive on the page. One can sense, for example, what the intellectual reasons for dividing the Pentateuch into four literary strands were (and are). Any layperson can read this book and appreciate the revolution that modern biblical scholarship spawned. One may quibble with *Who Wrote the Bible?* on the grounds that it avoids all questions of larger literary or theological relevance until the last chapter ("The World that the Bible Produced"). But still one must concede that Friedman has accounted for the fact that the Bible is more than the sum of its parts and that its canonical whole is worthy of admiration. Friedman is no theologian but he is wise enough to sense the important issues.

In his most recent book, *The Hidden Book in the Bible*, Friedman again translates modern biblical criticism for the layperson. In large measure, Friedman succeeds as he highlights the large themes and literary devices that govern the biblical story from Genesis through the beginning of 1 Kings. In an age that has witnessed the fracture of the biblical story into a myriad of conflicting voices reflecting no coherent whole, Friedman's reconstruction of an expansive, coherent story revealing the chosen people's identity is a welcome relief.

FRIEDMAN ARGUES, and then tries to show, that a coherent story of Israel's origins can be traced from the story of Eden through the rise of Solomon to the office of king. Scholars have long suggested that there are connections between the J narrative and the settlement narratives in Joshua and the Court History of David, but before Friedman no one had sat down and considered how such a narrative would look in any detail.

GARY A. ANDERSON is Professor of Old Testament/Hebrew Bible at Harvard Divinity School.

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A Bible for All of Christendom

Unfortunately, the originality of Friedman's argument does not comport well with the genre of a popular nonfiction work, even at the level of haute vulgarization. The bulk of the book (some 230 pages) consists of a translation of this unified narrative—the "hidden book"—while the author's argument that the hidden book is more than imaginative cutting and pasting is made in a mere thirty pages at the beginning. Four appendices at the end attempt to buttress this argumentation with a more traditional scholarly apparatus, but a thesis this novel demands a different format. Friedman would have been wise to set this out in terms befitting the scholarly guild to which he belongs before offering his insights to a more popular audience. As Friedman notes, Joseph Blenkinsopp had pointed toward his thesis when he wrote: "Stylistic analysis may suggest the work of one author beneath the present redaction of the Yahwist strand (J) and the Succession History (2 Samuel 8-20 plus 1 Kings 1-2) but it cannot hope to *establish* more than a homogenous development in literary type and expression." Friedman has done more than suggest, but he has not yet established.

I must add a word about the cultural and religious significance of the book. Here I am most disappointed. Friedman speaks of his excavative discovery as being close to "the Bible's heart," and suggests that a reading of it will "bring us back to where we could *experience* that process [of how the Bible was produced]." Shades of Johann Herder and nineteenth-century Romanticism: it as if critical scholarship has uncovered the *ipsissimum verbum* and all creation must tremble before its unmediated clarity. Far more perceptive are the words of Brevard Childs in his *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*: "The authority of the biblical text does not rest on a capacity to match original experiences, rather on the claim which the canonical text makes on every subsequent generation of hearers." Childs correctly chides those who believe we can naively reenter

the world of the actual historical persons who created the text.

In light of Friedman's claim to have recreated the authentic experience, it is more than a bit ironic to see what he makes of Israel's charter narrative, the covenant at Sinai. When Israel arrives at Sinai, she undergoes a lengthy ritual procedure to ensure her purity for the coming theophany. God instructs Moses: "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow; and they shall wash their clothes and be ready for the third day, because on the third day YHWH will come down on Mt. Sinai before the eyes of all the people. And you shall limit the people all around saying, 'Watch yourselves about going up in the mountain and touching its edge. Anyone who touches the mountain will be put to death'" (Exodus 19:10-12).

Having made these elaborate preparations—which are repeated three more times (Exodus 19:14, 21-22, 24)—God then tells Moses to go

down to the people. The theophany is about to occur. The episode Friedman reconstructs ends thusly: "And Moses went down to the people, and he said to them . . ." That's it. Whereas the Bible, as we presently have it, would locate the Ten Commandments (and/or the thunderstorm theophany of the deity) in this position, all Friedman can find in J is an ellipsis.

SOMETHING IS NOT right here. Either J knew more but whatever he knew has been excised in favor of another source, or Friedman has been too generous in his reconstruction of J and the result is a stilted narrative. Either way, the hazards of the modern critical enterprise are clearly on display: the Bible does not sort itself out into the neat and tidy wholes that source critics claim to find. When we sort out the Pentateuchal sources into their literary units we get fragments, not complete stories.

Before we come to the actual rev-

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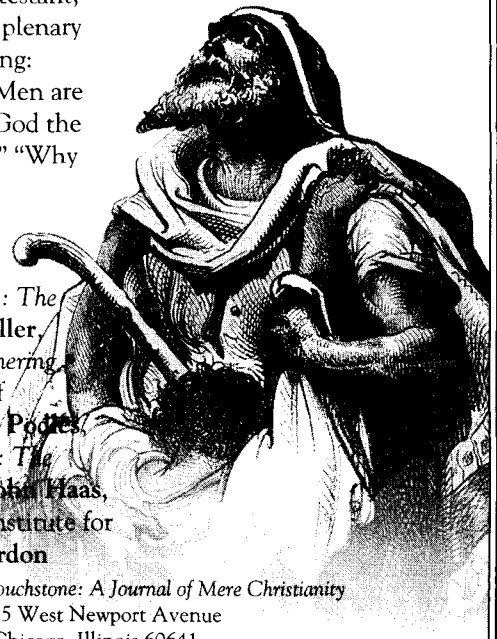
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elation J hears at Sinai—the so-called cultic decalogue (Exodus 34:14-26)—we have a very peculiar narrative that the reader is in no way prepared to understand. If Friedman is correct, J has prefaced the Sinai revelation with Israel's deliverance from the hand of Pharaoh at the sea of reeds. No account of Israel's disobedience is recounted, only the miraculous deliverance of God's beloved people from the fleshpots of Egypt (Exodus 13:21-22, and portions of 14).

In light of what we have before us, we would expect the redeemed nation to be the happy recipients of a saving God's life-giving words. Yet the actual theophany begins with a darker hue. God's merciful nature ("YHWH, YHWH is a merciful and gracious God") is contrasted to his demands for justice ("reckoning a father's crime on children and on children's children"). Moses immediately bows to the ground, evidently cowering in fear, and makes a fer-

vent plea: "If I've found favor in your eyes, my Lord, may my Lord go among us, because it is a stiff-necked people, and forgive our crime and our sin, and make us your possession." But nowhere in this reconstructed narrative of J do we find any evidence of Israel as "a stiff-necked people" (34:9). Friedman has left that part of Exodus out.

No intelligent reader can parse these lines without presuming some important event having gone before. In the "E" narrative we have that moment: the sin of the Golden Calf. Why does Friedman think this detail is optional? He is happy to jettison it and leave nothing in its place. Yet if J does not know E's Golden Calf, he ("she" for Friedman) must know something like it.

I don't mean to deny that modern critical reconstructions of the Bible's literary sources can be useful. Only fundamentalists would dispute the historical layering implied by source criticism. The problem is the confi-

dence critical scholarship places in the integrity of what it reconstructs. A competent reading of the Bible requires a method that is appropriate to the text it purports to interpret. Even if we grant Friedman his thesis that "J" continues through the installation of Solomon as king, he has not provided us with an organic literary unity we can call the hidden book in the Bible.

Seeking Something Spiritual

AFTER HEAVEN: SPIRITUALITY IN AMERICA SINCE THE 1950s. By ROBERT WUTHNOW. *University of California Press.* 277 pp. \$29.95.

SHOPPING FOR FAITH: AMERICAN RELIGION AND THE NEW MILLENNIUM. By RICHARD CIMINO and DON LATTIN. *Jossey-Bass.* 240 pp. (Includes CD-ROM.) \$25.

Reviewed by Elizabeth Powers

THESE BOOKS have as their subject what one of them refers to as the changed "religious landscape" in the U.S. in recent decades. *After Heaven* is written by a sociologist who has numerous books and articles on American religion to his credit. *Shopping for Faith* is a joint effort by the editor and publisher of the newsletter *Religion Watch* and the religion writer for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Their different styles (one scholarly and meditative, one breezy and journalistic) complement each other, and both verify that while Americans are less traditional in their religious views than they once were, they remain, however confusedly, a religious people.

Robert Wuthnow's book surveys historical changes in American spirituality. Despite the transience of much American experience and the seeming lack of deep roots,

ELIZABETH POWERS is coeditor, with Amy Mandelker, of *Pilgrim Souls: A Collection of Spiritual Autobiographies*, just out from Simon & Schuster.

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Americans traditionally settled in communities from which they did not stray far and in which the house of worship was the center of social life. "Indeed, the place where Americans could know God best was the local congregation," Wuthnow writes. This "dwelling-oriented" spirituality in which "organized religion [extended its] monopoly over spiritual practice" reached its zenith in the 1950s.

THE BULK OF Wuthnow's book gives an account of "unsettled times," beginning in the 1960s, when religious practice became "seeking-oriented." Basing this portion of his work on interviews with two hundred people, supplemented by other studies and large-scale opinion surveys, Wuthnow charts the transformation of the sacred into something fluid and portable, more likely to be found in the God within us or in the angel at our side than in the stodgy old church on the corner. Those who came of age in the 1960s and the following decades are the first generation to be reared in a fully commercialized consumer society, exposed to TV since birth, which means they have had "opportunities to explore new spiritual horizons" unknown to their parents and grandparents.

Unfortunately, seeking-oriented spirituality often led to little more than dabbling in different spiritual practices, when not to downright silliness. The 1980s initiated a reaction to this permissiveness, reassessing the claims of traditional morality. Still, there has not been a return to dwelling-oriented spirituality, which, according to Wuthnow, is at odds with the transience of modern life and with our "complex social realities."

Experimentation abides, if more disciplined. Thus, "practice-oriented spirituality," the third and final spiritual style Wuthnow considers, provides a mobile spirituality (for the mobile postmodern man) that has an anchor of sorts in religious activities that are pervasive and repetitious. It includes "the vital element of sustained commitment, without which no life can have coherence."

When he links his assessments to research studies and opinion surveys, Wuthnow comes up with some interesting results—for example, that the people most likely to see angels or to believe in miraculous encounters come from families where similar encounters are part of their religious histories. One wishes he had relied more on such hard data. Since he takes as his subject something rather fuzzy—"spirituality," the ways in which people express their personal relationship to the sacred—he most often falls back on his two hundred interviewees. Unfortunately, Wuthnow takes all their claims about their spiritual life at face value, even such claims as that a given subject is closer to God while gardening on Sunday than going to church.

Without specifying exactly what our "complex social realities" are, he takes it for granted that they are more complex, uncertain, and dangerous

than at any other time. His few examples of our complicated world (e.g., the "evil" of the Vietnam War—was not World War II evil and also more broadly experienced?) seem, on the contrary, to testify that "our time" is quite privileged, in fact so privileged that today we can hardly stop people from coming to America.

OUR CURRENT prosperity and the attendant consumer choices do make for a bewildering spiritual marketplace, but a glance at the historical record would indicate that interest in miraculous and mysterious experiences, angels, or even channeling is not a function of booksellers or of "the uncertainty of the times" but rather an enduring feature of human life. It is not that it "has become harder to know God in recent decades," but that so much consumer choice may deceive us into making us feel it is easy.

It is in the final chapter, in which

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DIANE WINSTON

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Wuthnow brings on stage two examples of "committed spiritual discipline" (a man who combines Methodist worship with Ignatian exercises and a massage therapist who has "her own religion"), that one recognizes the intellectual flaccidity that our prosperity has produced. Human nature being what it is, "private spirituality" only includes what appeals to its adepts. After removing all the hard things in traditional religious observance (those "boring" and "stifling" aspects that Wuthnow's subjects complain of), you can't help but succeed and feel good about yourself. Whatever their sincerity, one can't help sensing that the people Wuthnow describes are somewhat spiritually impoverished for having rejected the richness of traditional spiritual disciplines and the rigor that accompanies such practice. At least the guy who gives up meat for Lent knows what it is to struggle with himself when he drives by McDonald's. If he cheats, he might also feel bad about himself, something Wuthnow's subjects avoid at all costs.

The book is readable, but, perhaps without wishing to do so, it embodies the market-fueled animus toward traditional values. Its prejudices emerge most strongly when Wuthnow discusses conventional folks, for whom "pursuing a disciplined spiritual life [means], at most, rediscovering the soft technology of uttering a brief prayer before going to bed." Just as many of his subjects find "organized religion" colorless and bland, so too, Wuthnow finds, are the religious practices of most people.

Yet I suspect there are lots of genuinely religious people who outwardly display few signs of "serious commitment to spiritual discipline." They are ordinary folks, like the shepherds at the manger in Bethlehem who afterward went back to their normal occupations. Isn't the performance of such occupations—working, raising families, staying married to the person you wed, keeping a roof over your head, giving up meat for Lent—a "serious commitment to spiritual discipline"?

The result of going through such motions is also a constant exercise of the inner life. As they carry out these tasks (and probably while dozing during the sermon on Sunday), some people are even guided by their faith in a loving God. Not everyone, let us remind ourselves, can be Teresa of Ávila or Simone Weil.

If Wuthnow had compared the people he describes in his final chapter with either of those ascetics, he might have brought out important differences between then and now in "committed spiritual practice." While contemporary practitioners spend time "reflecting creatively about who they are and how they can best deepen their relationship with God," the hard task of discovering what God wants of them seems never to enter their accounts.

SHOPPING FOR FAITH, an oddly refreshing read, confirms that most people don't take—and probably never have taken—the road less traveled; but it also confirms that people are searching for something. It too has a number of irritating composite portraits of individual seekers, but the authors are not concerned with the depth or shallowness of religious experience. The closest they come to evaluating this is in their discussion of the explosive growth of Pentecostalism around the world:

Whether these soul-shaking experiences and religious conversions are the true action of the Holy Spirit, hypnotic trance states, or some other psychological trick makes little difference. They feel real. They inspire people to change their lives and commit themselves to another power, whether it's a higher power outside themselves or an inner voice crying out from the depths of their soul.

Cimino and Lattin take for granted a more or less traditional religious base that has been infused or assaulted by trends from the marketplace, some of which are religious, such as Buddhism, and some, such as femi-

nism and psychotherapy, not. They use their surveys to make predictions about how religious practice will be affected in the coming millennium. Their focus is not private spirituality, but instead the changing character of denominations. The title says it all: churchgoing and spiritual practice are forms of consumer behavior. And though they do not say so, this behavior is increasingly irrational or, in the words of the religion business, "experiential."

Readers can learn much of interest in this book: about church-growth consultants, congregational-trend specialists, the International Church of the Four-Square Gospel, and Mormon missionizing among the nonwhite immigrants of California. There is also much to ponder for those of a conservative religious persuasion.

Here are some of the book's predictions (dispersed throughout in bold face): in the "pick and choose" approach to faith of the future, experiential elements will enter into traditional Western religious teachings; churches that demand the most from their members will be the ones most likely to grow (while "mainline bodies will also shift toward a more conservative position to 'become new players in the religious growth market'"); "even traditional institutions like Roman Catholic convents will bend to the dictates of consumerism and the plethora of spiritualities in the wider culture"; the small group movement will increase; congregations that are the most vocal about diversity will have less success achieving it; computers will forge links among individual believers and thus bypass denominational control; though the "religious free market" encourages diversity, in the long run the market favors congregations that have a strong identity.

THE MOST USEFUL aspect of this book on shopping for faith is the accompanying "shopper's guide" in the form of a CD-ROM. When connected to the Internet, you can enter keywords on your computer, and you will be linked to an index

of websites that is constantly updated, allowing you to tap into all sorts of spiritual resources. As we've come to expect from the Internet, there are lots of choices.

Though *Shopping for Faith* is informative, its references, even to statistics on church attendance and denominational membership, are most often not to primary but to secondary sources. The authors also neglect to tell us whether the predictions they offer are valid for the next five years or the next hundred. In such a volatile marketplace, I would not bet on the latter.

A Paradoxical Genius

DANIEL DEFOE: THE LIFE AND STRANGE, SURPRISING ADVENTURES.
By RICHARD WEST. Carroll & Graf.
427 pp. \$26.

Reviewed by Philip Zaleski

THE BEST PHYSICAL description of Daniel Defoe comes to us, fittingly, from a wanted poster: "a middle siz'd spare man, about 40 years old, of a brown complexion, and dark brown-coloured hair, but wears a wig; a hooked nose, a sharp chin, grey eyes and a large mole near his mouth."

This unappealing description was issued by the Earl of Nottingham in 1702 against "Daniel de Foe, alias De Fooe," sought for "high crimes and misdemeanour" for publishing an anonymous parody of Tory religious invective. The poster, and the accusation that spawned it, neatly encapsulate much of Defoe's life: a writer on the lam, a lover of aliases, given to anonymous and pseudonymous productions; a middle-class merchant bewigged to pass as an aristocrat; a literary pugilist who scorned the orthodoxies of the day; a man judged by many of his con-

PHILIP ZALESKI is editor of *The Best Spiritual Writing 1998* and author, most recently, of *Gifts of the Spirit*. His article "The Strange Shipwreck of Robinson Crusoe" appeared in the May 1995 issue of *FIRST THINGS*.

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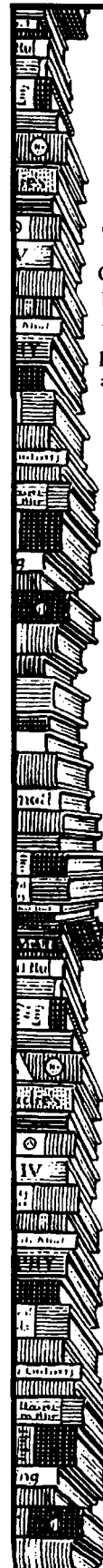
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temporaries to be a ferret, a sneak, a public menace.

Yet Defoe was also a devout Presbyterian, faithful husband, doting father, and genius of the first order, a man who invented both modern journalism and the modern novel in his furious forty-year career. His greatest achievement, *Robinson Crusoe*, is a masterpiece of religious prose that has appeared in over 1,200 editions in English alone, has been translated into almost every known language, and continues to instruct delighted readers, as it has for nearly three hundred years, on the basics of Christian civilization by means of one of the most exciting adventure stories ever penned.

How to reconcile the two Defoes? This is the mystery that any biographer must confront, and one that Richard West only partially resolves.

THE ENIGMA BEGINS with Defoe's birth. We remain uncertain about his year or place of birth, although 1661 in the parish of St. Giles, Cripplegate, seems likely. Raised a Dissenter—a Presbyterian in an Anglican nation—he was barred from Oxford and Cambridge and instead received three years of higher education under the Reverend Charles Morton, a future vice-president of Harvard University who drilled his pupils in science, modern tongues, and the intricacies of English rhetoric. Defoe learned his lessons well. He took away with him a superb prose style and a burning resentment of the upper classes who had denied him entrance to Oxbridge, coupled with a scarcely-disguised lust to join their ranks—a blend of envy and hatred common among young middle-class men even today.

This ambivalence toward social betters, suggests West, was one of Defoe's driving obsessions. Another was his terror of debt and his sense of being hounded by creditors, as well as by literary and political opponents. Defoe relished the harsh world of late-seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century business, when capitalism was coming of age; un-

fortunately, he had an uncanny knack for investing in projects that left him in ruins. He traded in cows, bricks, tobacco, honey, land, diving bells, and even civet cats, almost always for a loss. By his early thirties, Defoe had squandered his wife's considerable dowry, was in debt for 17,000 pounds, and had declared bankruptcy—an act that barred him for life from public service. West describes the aftermath with typical empathy: "The torment of mind he suffered . . . condemned him to a life of misery, fear, loneliness, and remorse, from which he could only escape through prayer, the love of his family, and eventually by writing books."

Defoe responded to the crisis with characteristic ingenuity: He decided to switch careers and become a journalist—and not just any journalist. As West enthuses, "He was the first master, if not the inventor, of almost every feature of modern newspapers, including the leading article, investigative reporting, the foreign news analysis, the agony aunt, the gossip column, the candid obituary, and even the kind of soul-searching piece which Fleet Street calls the 'Why, Oh Why.'"

THIS NEW VENTURE unleashed the best and worst in Defoe. On the one hand, he delighted in subterfuge. He wrote bogus letters to the editor, bogus travelogues, bogus histories; he worked as a journalistic double agent, writing for Tory journals while in the employ of the Whigs; he delighted in printing anti-Catholic drivel (and spent a lifetime seething about "Popish Plots," including, so he thought, the Great London Fire of 1666); he raked up scandal wherever he could, insulting enemies and shocking friends.

On the other hand, he vigorously defended his faith and accepted a prison term as the price of principle. Although it is not always acknowledged by his biographers—West does better here than many—Defoe's professional life focused on the place of religion in personal and public life. All his writings, from

novels to marriage manuals, from occult studies to political broadsides, stem from the viewpoint of a devout Dissenter fighting for survival in an Anglican nation. It was this issue that produced his first best-seller, *The True-Born Englishman* (1700), a poem of high passion and mordant wit defending the reign of the Protestant King William III. It contains the memorable lines:

Wherever God erects a house
of prayer,
The Devil always builds a
chapel there,
And 'twill be found upon
examination,
The latter has the largest
congregation.

Defoe's somewhat paradoxical love for both religious righteousness and literary deceit soon led to his undoing. In 1702 he published *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, the parody that occasioned the wanted poster quoted above, in which he suggested that the best way to handling religious nonconformists was to hang them. At first many Tories missed the joke and welcomed this splendid final solution. When they discovered that it was all a hoax, they went for Defoe's throat. Three visits to the pillory and a stretch in Newgate Prison resulted. According to West, this was one of the great defining moments in his subject's life, a near-martyrdom that, "far from breaking Defoe's spirit, . . . gave him the courage, patience, and resolution he needed during the years ahead."

Defoe's prison term also gave one of his admirers—Robert Harley, Speaker of the House of Commons and a moderate Tory—a chance to intervene on his behalf. Soon enough Defoe was set free by edict of Queen Anne and enlisted as a spy for Her Majesty's Government. Here, too, he stood out from the pack. In 1707 he wrote to his employer:

In my management here
[among pro-Catholic Jacobites] I am a perfect emissary. I
act the old part of Cardinal

Richelieu. I have my spies and my pensioners in every place, and I confess 'tis the easiest thing in the world to hire people here to betray their friends.

DEFOE'S YEARS AS secret-agent-cum-journalist make for the most exciting portions of the biography. West admires his subject and tolerates, even as he tsk-tsks, Defoe's most outrageous behavior—a refreshing change from the current fashion that requires biographers to rip their subjects to shreds. Happily, there is much that deserves admiration, not least Defoe's astonishing industry. He started a weekly newspaper, the *Review*, and from 1704-1713 wrote each issue in its entirety. He churned out one bizarre book after another: *The Dyet of Poland* (1705) transposes English politics to Gdansk, while the very title of *The Consolidator: Or Memoir of Sundry Transactions in the World of the*

Moon (also 1705) speaks for itself. For twenty years he wrote and spied; at one time, he ran eight newspapers, penning large portions of each himself. Approaching the watershed of his sixtieth year, his journalistic energies finally began to flag. Small wonder! But rather than retire his pen, Defoe reinvented himself again, and became, in 1719, the world's first novelist.

Here we run up against the mystery already alluded to: How can we explain the miracle of *Robinson Crusoe*? West prepares us for this glorious invention by harping on Defoe's love of subterfuge. For *Crusoe*, like many of Defoe's earlier works, is a hoax, a novel posing as autobiography ("The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner. . . . Written by Himself"). Defoe's subsequent novels—*Journal of the Plague Year*, *Moll Flanders*, *Roxana*, and the rest—belong to the

same shadowy genre of fiction passing as truth.

Crusoe's format, then, seems well-accounted for. But what of its content? Those who have read the unabridged version know that *Crusoe* is more than an adventure novel; it is a tale of religious conversion, telling how an isolated man rebuilds Christendom from some bits of flotsam and a repentant heart. Here West provides another clue, demonstrating how, as Defoe aged, he grew more convinced of the dangers of secularism and of the need for religious integrity and a rigorous moral code.

Defoe expounded these ideas in a series of books, written at the same time as *Crusoe*, including *The Family Instructor*, *Religious Courtship*, and *Conjugal Lewdness or Matrimonial Whoredom*. All three works counsel a strict Christian life, dispensing advice on wayward sons, impious wives, the evil of contracep-

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tion and abortion, and the danger of exercising the "frolic part" outside of the marriage chamber. As West points out, these texts not only establish Defoe as a champion of Christian virtue—a theme sounded over and over again in *Crusoe*—but also reveal his domestic happiness, including his love for his wife, Mary.

BUT WHAT OF *Crusoe*'s literary brilliance, its startling universality, which led Coleridge to remark that "compare the contemptuous Swift with the condemned De Foe, and how superior will the latter be found. . . . [He] raises me into the universal man. Now this is De Foe's excellence. You become a man while you read"? Here West is of little help. In place of analysis, he offers plot summary. It is pleasant to discover a Defoe biography that rises above the special-interest interpretations offered by Rousseau, Marx, Virginia Woolf, et al., but one wishes that West, who is obviously sympathetic to Defoe's religiosity, had done more to explore its role in his subject's greatest work. He does advance one pet theory, asserting, contrary to all prevailing *Crusoe* criticism, that the true-life tale of Alexander Selkirk was not the genesis for Defoe's masterpiece. The contention is amusing and smartly argued, but hardly makes up for West's clumsiness at literary discussion—a serious flaw in an otherwise solid book.

Defoe ended his professional years as he began them, writing a string of curiosities that include *General History of the Pirates* (1726) and *The*

Universal History of Apparitions (1729). He died alone in a London boarding house, hiding from debtors. The cause of death was given as "lethargy," an ailment that would have surely killed a man of such compressed energies. He left behind 566 books and pamphlets as well as abundant evidence, if such be needed, of the infinite mystery of the human person. For who can fathom this liar, spy, and wearer of masks, this incomparable literary genius, this tireless exponent of Christian goodness? Which aspect reigned supreme we will never know, but we can be sure, from a letter written a year before his death, where Defoe placed his hope: "Be it that the passage is rough and the day stormy, by which way soever He pleases to bring me to the end of it, I desire to finish life with this temper of soul in all cases: *Te Deum Laudamus*."

BRIEFLY NOTED

U.S. FOREIGN POLICY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: THE RELEVANCE OF REALISM. By ROBERT J. MYERS. *Louisiana State University Press*. 184 pp. \$24.95.

Contemporary writing about America's role in the world is too often marred by abstruse theorizing or, at the popular level, by oversimplification and inapt analogies. For readers in search of more ruminative fare, Kenneth W. Thompson and the Louisiana State University Press provide a valuable service with their *Political Traditions in Foreign Policy* series, which examines American foreign policy through the lens of political philosophy. The latest installment in this catalogue is a thoughtful primer by Robert J. Myers on the history and utility of foreign policy realism. Realism, as opposed to idealism, assumes the perduring character of human nature and the persistence of state power as the basic currency of international relations; and it presumes that man's search for security will, as

it has always, define those relations. The analysis here ranges from discussions of the Peloponnesian War and the history of Chinese foreign policy to successive indictments of Kant, historicism, and the United Nations. To each, the author brings to bear a formidable array of historical references, logical proofs, and moral judgments. Toward the end of his survey, Myers turns to the American experience and weighs how fealty to the tenets of realism might enhance the conduct of U.S. foreign policy. The legacy of American exceptionalism, of course, complicates this task. As Henry Kissinger has ruefully noted, "The singularities that America has ascribed to itself . . . impose on it obligations to crusade for them around the world." To his credit, Myers, unlike many of his fellow realists, concedes that in foreign policy considerations of human rights and ideology may coexist alongside those of power and self-interest—coexist, that is, so long as American policymakers recognize that the rest of the world subscribes to truths of a more primal sort. And, indeed, other than to counsel prudence, realism offers little in the way of a normative theory. As a guide to the analytical certainties from which sound policy should proceed, however, this volume provides a useful reminder of truisms too many American strategists seem to have forgotten.

—Lawrence F. Kaplan

PRINCETON IN THE NATION'S SERVICE: RELIGIOUS IDEALS AND EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE, 1868-1928. By P. C. KEMENY. *Oxford University Press*. 353 pp. \$45.

Paul Kemeny carefully recounts the transformation of Princeton's religious character under four presidents—James McCosh, Francis L. Patton, Woodrow Wilson, and John Grier Hibben. During the sixty-year period he chooses, the college's conservatively evangelical Presbyterianism devolved into a "nonsectarian" and thus unstable Protestantism, and thence into a scholarly modernism. He takes as keynote the de-



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bate between James McCosh and Harvard's Charles Eliot about the place of religion on campus, in which the former argued that "faith in God and Savior is the most potent force which can be brought to bear upon the young." Eliot identified "service to the nation" as the university's mission, for which any sectarian sponsorship was an undue restraint. With a mastery of diverse sources seen rarely in a first work, Kemeny chronicles all the internal pushing and shoving as three partisan yet ironically allied forces pursued their rival accounts of how Princeton could remain religious. The codeword accepted by all parties was that it should be "nonsectarian," and under that cover Princeton's aspiration dissolved easily from "Presbyterian" to "Protestant" to "religious." The conservatives retreated into fundamentalism; the moderates adopted a good-works, good-cheer piety; and the liberals ac-

tively rejected the meaningless reminders of the naive past. This carefully compiled chronicle displays the process by which the modernists do not simply displace the pietists, but are their offspring. The evangelical pietism of early McCosh, in its anxiety not to claim any "sectarian" identity, inexorably degrades into the unaware modernism of late Hibben. When McCosh praises "those grand philanthropic and missionary efforts which are one of the glories of our country," he discloses his belief that faith in Jesus can as well (or better) belong in a nation as in a church. When Patton says, "The best Christians are the best citizens," one does not expect their belief to range far beyond their civility. When Wilson tells what it means to be a Presbyterian, the intent listener smothers for want of oxygen: "I do not see how the spirit of learning can be separated or divorced from the spirit of religion. At its heart lies that

which is ideal, which elevates and ennobles, while it quickens the pulse and fills the lungs with a new and vivifying breath—the love of truth, the desire to see with the eyes of the mind, to see the things which are invisible and which stand fast through all generations." Hibben's grievance against F. Scott Fitzgerald's compromising Princeton memoir, *This Side of Paradise*, provides an unwitting moment of truth: "It would be an overwhelming grief to me . . . should I feel that we have nothing to offer but the outgrown symbols of a past whose reality has long since disappeared." By this time Kemeny's account has made it strikingly clear how Princeton religion, which dared not strain the capacity of (the spoiled youth of) a nation, could not have held a grip on the gospel. He offers here the most extended account we have of any university's dissociation from its Christian self-understanding. But, though a

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prodigious chronicler, he has not succeeded nearly so well as a historian, and that is a shame. At the end of this carefully recounted tale of a generic gospel gone yada yada by being compelled not to offend any national constituency, the reader is stunned to encounter the author's own conclusion: "The displacement of nineteenth-century evangelical interests and practices . . . did not lead to the secularization or marginalization of Protestantism. . . . Rather the university had adjusted its religious mission to modern educational realities and the nation's growing cultural pluralism. Liberal Protestantism . . . directed the nation's future leaders to look beyond the material to transcendent, unseen realities for inspiration to help usher the Kingdom of God in America." What comes to mind is the scene in *Sunset Boulevard* when Eric von Stroheim, Gloria Swanson's husband/chauffeur/butler, assures William Holden that she will not "find out" what she has become. "She never will. That is my job, and it has been for a long time."

—James Tunstead Burtchae, Jr.,
C.S.C.

BEAUVOIR AND THE SECOND SEX: FEMINISM, RACE, AND THE ORIGINS OF EXISTENTIALISM. By MARGARET SIMONS. *Rowman & Littlefield*. 262 pp. \$25.95.

This collection of previously published materials wouldn't be worth noting, even briefly, were it not so perfectly representative of the low state to which certain sectors of the academy have sunk. Simons (of the Department of Philosophical Studies at Southern Illinois University) interviewed Simone de Beauvoir about Sartre, philosophy, and feminism, inter alia, while doing graduate work in Paris during the late '70s and early '80s; the text of those interviews is included here along with several essays on matters feminist. Simons expertly demonstrates the latest academic "discipline": if the testimony of her subject doesn't jibe with her own hegemony theory, she merely con-

tradicts the testimony. For instance, here's what Beauvoir has to say on the subject of Sartre: "Obviously, I was not able to influence him, since I did not do philosophy. I criticized him, I discussed many of his ideas with him, but I did not have any philosophical influence on Sartre, whereas he had such an influence on me, that is certain." Nonsense, says Simons, and declares that Beauvoir was the victim of oppressive social forces. For Simons, that oppressed condition invalidates Beauvoir's own remarks about her philosophical unoriginality—apparently Beauvoir does not know her own mind. (But wait, isn't that what the phalocrats would have us believe?) Or again, when Simons introduces the question of female identity and sexual separatism, she expects Beauvoir to respond with the radical feminist party line that women are preferable, even superior, to men, and that separatism is the only way to go. But again Beauvoir dissents: "I am completely against it, because in the end [radical feminists] come back to men's mythologies, that is, that woman is a being apart, and I find that completely in error. Better that she identify herself as a human being who happens to be a woman." It is a pathetic irony indeed that because of the ideological confinement imposed by today's academy, this very icon of feminism isn't allowed to speak for herself. There are moments of genuine hilarity in these exchanges, as when in an unguarded moment Simons says to Beauvoir, "It bothers me that you say you are not a philosopher. I don't know why. I suppose it is because I spend so much time treating your work philosophically." Thus are the dimensions of intellectual dishonesty among latter-day feminists revealed. If Beauvoiran feminism was tragedy, the current feminism is farce. Simons has at least said all the politically correct things, if not the true things, and she has said them in job-securing print.

—Norah Vincent

THE TRUTH OF THINGS: LIBERAL ARTS AND THE RECOVERY OF REALITY. By MARION MONTGOMERY. *Spence*. 309 pp. \$24.95.

A collection of rambling, often unfocused, thematic essays that still manages to provide valuable insights—including an acute criticism of Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* and a superb analysis of Mark Twain's story *The Mysterious Stranger*. Montgomery's strength as a classroom teacher is much in evidence throughout, particularly in his insistence that "the ultimate end of liberal arts training must always be to prepare a particular man to hear, really hear, Oedipus' agonized cry so well that he knows agony as never before." Montgomery conveys, moreover, a Thomism that seeks the "recovery of intellect from its gnostic delusions." "Existence is real," he says, and "it has a meaning beyond any prideful supposition of my finite intellect"; therefore we have an obligation to consider real things rather than our own imagined relation to them. The modern world, he maintains, has lost this capacity, the "immediate historical cause" being "the divorce of humanism from Christianity." Current liberal arts education seeks above all to give students "autonomous" minds, but Montgomery sees this as precisely the problem: an autonomous mind is a rejection of reality, thus of God, and accordingly not the purpose for which liberal education exists. For all its good sense, however, the book as a whole would have been much better if it had displayed the taut, clear prose that is proper to essays rather than the discursive style more appropriate to classroom teaching.

—Richard Cowden Guido

BUILDING A PROTESTANT LEFT: CHRISTIANITY AND CRISIS MAGAZINE, 1941-1993. By MARK HULSETH. *University of Tennessee Press*. 374 pp. \$38.

Christianity and Crisis was founded in 1941 to promote the views of

"Christian realism" against what Reinhold Niebuhr and others viewed as the moral sentimentalism of the *Christian Century* and kindred voices of the Protestant left. Thus the author, who teaches American Studies at the University of Tennessee, would seem to have the wrong title. The originating purpose of *C&C* was not to build a Protestant left but to challenge and, if possible, displace the regnant left. By the time of Niebuhr's death in 1971, and much more virulently in the years running up to its collapse in 1993 when it ran out of readers, *C&C* had uncritically embraced the "radicalized" liberalism that scorned Niebuhr's "Christian realism" as little more than an ideology of capitalist, sexist, racist oppression dressed up as Christian ethics. The author is clearly sympathetic to that radicalized turn, and the villains in his telling of the story are the former liberals turned neo-conservative, notably the Editor-in-Chief of this journal, who, he claims, opportunistically capitalized on a political climate increasingly unsympathetic to the left. Controlling for that blatant bias, *Building a Protestant Left* is a thoroughly researched and very useful examination of an important dimension of the American religious situation in the last half century.

BETTY FRIEDAN AND THE MAKING OF THE FEMININE MYSTIQUE: THE AMERICAN LEFT, THE COLD WAR, AND MODERN FEMINISM. By DANIEL HOROWITZ. *University of Massachusetts Press*. 355 pp. \$29.95.

First it was an authorized biography. Then Horowitz started digging up some things that Friedan didn't want unearthed. So even though Horowitz was basically sympathetic to Friedan's feminist position, his authorization was revoked—but the book still came out. The dirty little secret? Betty Friedan wasn't an unhappy housewife after all. It's not the unhappy part that's wrong. It's the housewife part. Friedan was anything but an oppressed little woman. Her early

adult years were spent at exclusive Smith College, during and after which she worked as a journalist and activist for the Stalinist cause. Instead of suffocating under household chores, she had a full-time maid, abrogated all domestic responsibilities while writing *The Feminine Mystique*, and, in the words of Carl Friedan (her husband), "seldom was a wife and mother." This radical past didn't fit with the home-as-comfortable-concentration-camp image required by *The Feminine Mystique*, but her solution was simple—she lied. The cat is out of the bag now. With devastating detail, Horowitz has blown the lid off the Friedan mystique.

ROME HAS SPOKEN: A GUIDE TO FORGOTTEN PAPAL STATEMENTS AND HOW THEY HAVE CHANGED THROUGH THE CENTURIES. Edited by MAUREEN FIEDLER and LINDA RABBEN. *Crossroad*. 243 pp. \$19.95 paper.

The editors, both associated with the Quixote Center in Maryland, join with others, mainly vocal dissidents, in making at tedious length the obvious point that popes in the past have said things that differ from Catholic magisterial teaching—on ecumenism, religious freedom, the role of women, usury, sexual pleasure, and so forth. In more serious hands, this might have been a study in the development of doctrine. Under the direction of Fiedler, Rabben & Co. it is an exercise in the deconstruction of doctrine. The conclusion is that, because there have been changes in the past, everything is up for grabs now. The liberal Protestant magazine *Christian Century* calls the book "a handy, entertaining compendium." Entertaining, as in silly.

CARDINAL MANNING: AN INTELLECTUAL BIOGRAPHY. By JAMES PEREIRO. *Clarendon*. 359 pp. \$82.

Henry Edward Cardinal Manning counted John Henry Newman, Edward Pusey, and William Gladstone

among his friends and partners in argument. He also played a major role in the First Vatican Council, and was instrumental in the development of the dogma of papal infallibility. It's no surprise, then, that behind such a great public life lay a great intellectual and spiritual adventure. Pereiro tells the story of Manning's journey to, and efforts within, the Roman Catholic Church, with special emphasis on the theological and personal struggles they entailed. In addition to examining Manning's own development, Pereiro provides useful discussions of certain elements in Anglican and Catholic theology, as well as a detailed account of the events of Vatican I. The result is an engaging analysis of one of the most vibrant periods in England's religious history, and a finely drawn portrait of an exemplary man.

A DEFENDER OF SOUTHERN CONSERVATISM: M. E. BRADFORD AND HIS ACHIEVEMENTS. Edited by CLYDE N. WILSON. *University of Missouri Press*. 192 pp. \$29.95.

M. E. Bradford of Texas died, still a relatively young man, in 1993, and left behind admirers and some bitter enemies. In the tradition of the Southern Agrarians, he defended in literature and political philosophy a superior way of life that he believed had been destroyed by the ideological equalizers led by Abraham Lincoln and his ilk. At the beginning of the Reagan Administration, he and others thought he was slated to head up the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the defeat of his candidacy became a cause célèbre defining the division between "necons" and "paleocons." Most of the essays in the book are tributes, sometimes laced with a polemical edge that Bradford might have approved. Eugene Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, however, point out that Bradford and the tradition he championed never came to honest terms with the legacy of slavery, unlike William Faulkner, to whom Bradford was so devoted.

THE REDHUNTER: A NOVEL BASED ON THE LIFE OF SENATOR JOE MCCARTHY. By WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY. *Little, Brown*. 421 pp. \$24.50.

Forty-six years ago, Buckley and his brother-in-law the late L. Brent Bozell (to whom he dedicates the present book) published *McCarthy and His Enemies*. Since then he has done a great deal of thinking about McCarthy and McCarthyism, and has come to the view that the junior Senator from Wisconsin turned out to be, however inadvertently, the greatest enemy of the anti-Communist cause he championed. There is nought in this novel for the comfort of the leftist enemies of McCarthy, for the story leaves no doubt that the Communist subversion that the Senator intended to exorcise was all too real. Despite everything, McCarthy is portrayed sympathetically: a tragic figure done in by ego, alcoholism, and misplaced trust in his aide, Roy Cohn. *The Redhunter* is a fascinating tale fascinatingly told, and is warmly recommended to those who want to make sense of a tumultuous time that continues to reverberate through our political culture.

PRAYERS PLAINLY SPOKEN. By STANLEY HAUERWAS. *InterVarsity Press*. 132 pp. \$12.99.

These are prayers to be savored—

specific, idiosyncratic, and honest. A prayer for thanksgiving: "We praise you, we thank you, for making us alive through your exuberant creation. Thank you for creating a world so full of color (particularly lime green), so full of difference (such as armadillos), so full of magic (such as your Word and sacraments). The wonder of it all saves us from our narcissistic presumptions that everything finally depends on us." For laughter: "Funny Lord, Jester King, you are surely a strange God. You must have an extraordinary sense of humor to trust your kingdom to a people like us." For children: "Thank you for these your children, who screw up our lives, thus teaching us our true desires. Like your Son, they are our fleshly adventures, because through them we learn patient hope." The rest of them are every bit as delightful.

JOHN PAUL II AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE. Edited by BYRON L. SHERWIN and HAROLD KASIMOW. *Orbis*. 236 pp. \$18 paper.

A useful introduction to aspects of this pontificate's initiatives in dialogue with Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and other world religions, including some of the pertinent official statements as well as wide-ranging interviews with various participants. Foreword by Edward

Idris Cardinal Cassidy.

ADORATION: EUCHARISTIC TEXTS AND PRAYERS THROUGHOUT CHURCH HISTORY. Edited by DANIEL P. GUERNSEY. *Ignatius*. 250 pp. \$14.95 paper.

Among Catholics today there is a marked revival of the practices associated with Eucharistic Adoration. Drawing on biblical and traditional sources, this book provides a rich resource for personal and communal devotion.

CONTEMPORARY JEWISH THEOLOGY: A READER. Edited by ELLIOT N. DORFF and LOUIS E. NEWMAN. *Oxford University Press*. 552 pp. \$49.95 cloth, \$27.95 paper.

An extremely useful collection of twentieth-century Jewish theological writings on such varied topics as the nature of God, creation, revelation, redemption, covenant, law, the Holocaust, and the State of Israel. The authors anthologized are among the most significant Jewish thinkers of our time, including a number of FIRST THINGS contributors (David Novak, Michael Wyschogrod, Jakob J. Petuchowski, Emil Fackenheim, and Peter Ochs) as well as their venerable predecessors (Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber, and Abraham Joshua Heschel, among others).

THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

BILL CLINTON AND THE AMERICAN CHARACTER

This is the long promised reflection on what “the Clinton affair” does or does not mean for the state of the republic. It is of course an interim reflection, since people will be trying to sort this out for many years to come. But for now at least some of the dust has settled and the main outline of the story is clear enough. I mean, of course, the story surrounding the White House intern, which, admittedly, keeps bumping into other stories. For the next little while we are stuck with a President who, beyond reasonable doubt, is guilty of perjury, tampering with witnesses, and obstruction of justice, and who probably is a rapist. That we are better off stuck with him rather than having removed him from office was, many thought, the clinching argument of Dale Bumpers, former Senator from Arkansas, during the Senate trial. “If you have difficulty because of an intense dislike of the President, and that’s understandable, rise above it,” Bumpers exhorted the Senators. “He is not the issue. He will be gone. You won’t. So don’t leave a precedent from which we may never recover and almost surely will regret. . . . After all, he’s only got two years left.”¹ That the impeached President was not the issue in an impeachment trial was among the more curious assertions in this curious affair.

But it is true that the public contention was about more than Bill Clinton. For a year and a half we have been treated to seemingly endless discussion about what all this means for our constitutional order, our political culture, and, inevitably, “the American character.” In this reflection, it is the last question that is of particular interest. This “journal of religion and public life” does not understand

public life primarily in terms of politics as that term is ordinarily used. It should not be surprising, therefore, that in this space President Clinton has seldom been mentioned since his election in 1992. In fact, in more than seven years he has been mentioned about ten times, mainly in connection with his statements and actions relative to abortion. So we have hardly been obsessed with the man.

This is not to suggest, however, that I have not had definite views about him. Permit me to begin with a personal word about how I understand his sinking of our political culture in apparently bottomless mendacity. When he started running for President he was known as a “New Democrat”—meaning a liberal mildly mugged by reality—and I was inclined to see him as among the less bad of a bad lot of Democrats. Until I came across an old video of the program, I had quite forgotten that at the beginning of January 1993, I had done an extended one-on-one interview with Robert MacNeil of what was then the *MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour* about the impending Clinton presidency. Asked by Mr. MacNeil what I expected, I answered: “I think what I expect, and maybe what I wish as well, is that he will continue on a trajectory [of] trying to move the Democratic Party into, if not the center, at least into conversational distance with most Americans. I think he has taken the lessons of the 1972 McGovern debacle very much to heart and he could have a real opportunity, especially when he speaks of a new covenant with America, to engage in a new kind of political discourse.”

Few may remember now, but a “new covenant” with the American people was a major theme of the Clinton campaign of 1992. Because he received only 43 percent of the vote, I noted, “he knows he has to reach out in trying to rebuild trust in a deeply confused and conflicted society.” “That would be a very significant contribution. There is reason to believe he might do that. There is a lot of reason to believe he might not. We have to hope for the best now with Bill Clinton; we have to hope that what he did in order to secure the nomination, which is understandable, is not the last word. He had to really lock himself in tightly to pretty extreme interest groups on issues such as abortion, school choice, homosexual rights construed as civil rights. Now the question is, now that the party is his, can he move to make the American people, this deeply

conflicted people, his constituency in something like a covenant, in something like a conversation that can elevate the politics of our time."

In that interview, I referred to our "culture war"—a term I had been using since the late 1970s—and said it was very sad that Clinton had made the economy the central issue of the campaign, and that George Bush had allowed him to do that. "That's not what Americans are most disturbed about today," I said. "They are disturbed about What kind of people are we? And what kind of people are we going to be?" Was I hopeful, MacNeil asked, that Clinton is prepared to lead in addressing these questions, to which I responded, "Of course. The alternative to hope is despair." MacNeil: "Do you think he is, then?" I said, "I want to hope he is. I hope he takes advantage of what now clearly is an opportunity that no Democrat has had since McGovern." After elaborating on that at some length, the interview concluded with my saying: "I think that, and this now is a dreadful scenario and it's the flip side of what I said earlier, if President Clinton were to move vigorously to get passage of the [pro-abortion] Freedom of Choice Act in Congress and if he then, as he at times said he would, put Justices on the Supreme Court for whom it would be necessary to pass the litmus test of *Roe v. Wade*, we would have a divide, a conflict of morality in our public life, much more intense than anything we have seen since the nineteenth-century conflict over slavery. It's a frightening prospect."

I tried, then, to put the best construction on Clinton's election, but I'm afraid that did not last long. As I said, I had quite forgotten about the MacNeil/Lehrer broadcast, which is not surprising, since a few days later, on January 10, 1993, I was hit with an emergency cancer operation which I barely survived. Some days later, after I had been removed from the intensive care unit, I was lying in the hospital bed, plugged with tubes and surrounded by friends. We were watching a Clinton news conference following his inauguration, at which he announced that he was rescinding the Reagan-Bush executive orders that placed pitifully modest restrictions on government support for abortion, and said the military should be open to gays. In words that have been frequently quoted back to me since then, I painfully raised my head from the pillow and announced—in what I am told was an oracular tone—"Mark my words. We are watching a man stumbling through the rubble of a ruined presidency." I have never had a moment's doubt about the accuracy of that pronouncement. Nobody could know all the ways he would stumble, nor how sordid the rubble would be, but whatever promise this presidency held was ruined from the beginning.

Keeping His Word

The Clinton news conference was on the

anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* decision, the very day that tens of thousands were marching in the streets of Washington to give life a chance. There was nothing in Clinton's words about his famous propensity for feeling their pain, nor even the slightest gesture of ambivalence about the slaughter of the innocents. Completely absent was any reference to a "new covenant," or reaching out to create a "national conversation" about who we are and intend to be. For Clinton, it seemed, the thousands of marchers, and the majority of Americans who are morally troubled by abortion, did not exist. Those who believe the defense of the innocent is the great moral cause of our time were undeserving of even passing acknowledgment. In tones of unctuous self-righteousness, Clinton declared himself the champion of the presumably self-evident justice of a "woman's right to choose." It is the only promise that he was to keep.

The gays did not get what they wanted with the military, and on other major issues—for example, welfare reform, crime, and free trade—Clinton would prove himself to be what liberals call a "moderate" Republican. As for foreign policy, there, too, he is stumbling through ever deeper rubble. His only ambitious and unabashedly liberal proposal, the effort to socialize medicine led by his wife, went down in flames before it even came to a vote. Although pundits persist in calling him a successful politician, there have been few successes apart from presiding over the enactment of Republican policies. Only on abortion has he kept his word. Also in foreign policy, the one consistent element has been the effort to establish abortion as an internationally mandated human right. In the history books he will be most accurately described as The Abortion President.

Not all readers will agree, and I do not wish to overplay it, but I believe that abortion is the lie of which all his other lies are the excretion. It is said that, if one can lie about this, one can lie about anything. To be sure, many people are less than honest about abortion, but the discussion then turns to what ought to be done about it. Honest people can disagree about that. Honest people cannot deny what is done in abortion. With Bill Clinton, that adamant denial leaves no room for the slightest suggestion that there might be legitimate cause for moral uneasiness. What is so striking is that this is the one uncompromised and uncompromisable position of his presidency. Never once in all these years has this famously lip-biting practitioner of welling empathy publicly acknowledged even a twitch of uncertainty about the unlimited abortion license imposed by *Roe v. Wade*. The dogmatic assertion of a right to kill the helpless and innocent is a lie so wild that it cannot be—to use the Clinton term of art—compartmentalized.

Of course there have been many other lies. His

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friends and political allies have said that he is a remarkably good liar. Obviously, that is not true. A good liar does not have a reputation for being a good liar. The other lies, big and little, have been self-serving and opportunistic, as is also the abortion lie. Maybe, as many who have known him claim, he was a liar from the start. His perception of reality, they say, has always been subservient to ambition and desire. In some perverse way, Clinton may, at least most of the time, believe what he says. After meeting with Clinton early in the presidency, my colleague James Nuechterlein described him as “serially sincere.” Clinton seems to be persuaded, it is observed, that he really means whatever he is saying at the time. I don’t know if that is right. Did he believe what he was saying when, in January of last year, he told the American people he had never had any kind of sexual relationship with Miss Lewinsky? If so, we are dealing here not with an extraordinary capacity for compartmentalization but with a species of autism—an absorption in self-centered subjectivity securely insulated from reality. The external referents by which truth and falsehood are determined are made irrelevant by virtue of what appears to be a self-blinding that has brought about the spectacle now evident to all, that of a man stumbling through the rubble of a ruined presidency.

The President We Deserve?

But what does this tell us about “the character of the American people”? After all, they elected him, and did so twice. Not by a majority, to be sure, but by enough to secure his claim to the office, and securing that seems to be his main goal and achievement. The failure of the political process to remove him from office has been turned by some into an indictment of the character of the American people. The people, we are told, got the President that they deserve. In 1976 Jimmy Carter campaigned by promising America a government as good as its people. Now it is said that America has a government, or at least a President, as bad as its people. That, I believe, is a conclusion not to be lightly accepted.

Shortly after the Lewinsky scandal broke, I wrote in this space: “If, as almost all informed parties seem to believe, Mr. Clinton has during his term of office had sex with one or more women other than his wife, and if he has directly looked the American people in the eye and lied through his teeth in denying it, and if the American people know this and still allow him to continue in office, I promise critics who say I have an excessively hopeful view of the American character that I will engage in an agonizing reappraisal of my position.”² Obviously, I have some explaining to do, and it will take some little doing. I trust it will not be excessively agonizing for the reader.

A most doleful conclusion about the American

character was announced by Paul Weyrich, President of the Free Congress Foundation, on February 16, 1999, and has been the subject of widespread commentary.³ Weyrich is an old war-horse of conservative causes and in the late seventies he was the one who suggested to Jerry Falwell the name “moral majority.” Now he has concluded that it was all a dreadful mistake. “What Americans would have found absolutely intolerable only a few years ago, a majority now not only tolerates but celebrates.” Until now, he says, “we have assumed that a majority of Americans basically agrees with our point of view.” “I no longer believe that there is a moral majority. I do not believe that a majority of Americans actually shares our values.” The United States “is very close to becoming a state totally dominated by an alien ideology, an ideology bitterly hostile to Western culture.” We must now face the fact, he says, “that politics itself has failed.” Conservatives must now “secede” and form “some sort of quarantine” from the general culture. Paraphrasing the sixties slogan, “turn on, tune in, drop out,” Weyrich urges conservatives to turn off, tune out, and drop out—in the hope that they can “find places, even if it is where we physically are right now, where we can live godly, righteous, and sober lives.”

It is hard to know how to take Weyrich’s statement. Within weeks he was back at his old political stand, touting Republican presidential candidates, just as though politics had not failed after all. But he says he is deadly serious about his announcement of the end of politics. If so, it is depressing that he labored for more than thirty years under the deadly delusion of there being a moral majority that already agreed with his positions and was only awaiting the opportunity to give that agreement effective political expression. That was not the case and is not the case, and is probably never going to be the case. Most people most of the time are thoroughly indifferent to politics, which is probably just as well. For most who do pay attention, politics is mainly entertainment, much like following baseball. The public contention for moral truth is always a minority vocation; it is a task to be pursued, in St. Paul’s words to Timothy, “in season and out of season.” To say that politics has failed is to say that the American experiment has definitively failed. There have been and are today societies in which politics—free deliberation and decision about how to order public life—is precluded. It is the better part of wisdom to know that, in whatever form, it could happen here and may be happening here—as, for instance, in the judicial usurpation of politics. But the claim that it has happened here, that politics has failed, is an apocalyptic excitement to be kept on a tight leash.

There are other religious and political conservatives saying, in effect, that for thirty years

they tried to wake up America and have now concluded that it can't be done. This is the message of columnist Cal Thomas and Michigan pastor Ed Dobson in their book *Blinded by Might*. In fact, Dobson, after a stint with Falwell's Moral Majority, invoked a pox on politics many years ago, and it is hard to know how seriously to take Thomas on this score. He, too, is back to his old political stand in his syndicated column that runs neck and neck with George Will's in being the most published in the country. But after the failed impeachment effort, the Weyrich-Thomas-Dobson line seems to be gaining ground. To the extent that they are issuing a caution against the dangers of politicizing religion and are underscoring the limits of what can be achieved through politics, their statements should be welcomed. But it is more than that. It expresses a painful deflation of political expectations that can only be explained by a prior and thoroughly unwarranted inflation. In addition, it purports to know much too much about the character of the American people.

Enter the Neo-Puritans

Last October Andrew Sullivan set the party line for one liberal reading of what has happened to conservatism.⁴ In a *New York Times Magazine* article, "Going Down Screaming," he depicted conservatives as embracing a neo-Puritanism that increasingly rails against a decadent culture. This journal, he said, is "the spiritual nerve center" of a new conservatism of "moral righteousness" (he meant self-righteousness, of course) that sounds increasingly like a twisted replay of the radicalism of the sixties. Alan Wolfe is a sociologist at Boston University who directed interviews of two hundred suburbanites and concluded in *One Nation, After All* that America is a country of more or less happy liberals. He, too, has had fun with the Weyrich-Thomas-Dobson claims, noting the similarity with sixties radicalism, and suggesting that we may be witnessing the breakup of the alliance between economic conservatives and the "moral regulators" in the Republican party. Both kinds of conservatives, he says, subscribed to a "new class theory" which claimed that sundry elites were radically at odds with the values of most Americans. The Clinton affair, he says, gave the majority a chance to take a stand against the "relativism" of the elites. "But the opposite happened. As the President's popularity held steady and even grew, conservative moralists decided that the problem was not Bill Clinton but the large majority of Americans who wanted him to remain in office. Faced with its first test, the new class theory failed."⁵

New class theory was and is a good deal more sophisticated than Alan Wolfe suggests, but that is another argument. I cite him only to illustrate the uses to which some liberals are putting what they

take to be conservative despair of the American character. Columnist William Safire is a conservative of a strongly libertarian bent, and he reaches similar conclusions. He is puzzled that so many are so fanatically loyal to a rascal like Clinton. (Forget that George Stephanopolous, Dee Dee Myers, and a host of other associates do not seem to be terribly loyal. The White House calls them the "commentraitors.") Based on his admittedly unscientific reading of responses he has received, Safire suggests that, if people feel they have to choose between Clinton and the neo-Puritans, they'll take Clinton. "There we have a snapshot of . . . this President's remarkably solid support. The loyalists' Clinton: not a reckless predator of women but a victim of an elitist-moralist plot; not a breaker of solemn oaths but a breaker of moral chains; not a cornered con man but a hero to all who feel hunted. Is this the new, much different, Silent Majority?"⁶

Among conservatives, Paul Gigot of the *Wall Street Journal* offers a vigorous riposte to the claim that the failure to remove Clinton is an indictment of the American people.⁷ "Those who know Paul Weyrich," he says, "understand that he will focus on the hole in any donut. But now he sees a hole and calls it an abyss." Gigot recounts the conservative successes of the past twenty years, from winning the Cold War to welfare reform to the ascendancy of school choice. He cites data suggesting that only 40 percent thought Clinton's offenses did not deserve impeachment, but more who worried about the disruptive effect of removing him from office, many of whom found the prospect of Al Gore as President "scary." "This narrow definition of political self-interest," says Gigot, "may be regrettable, but it isn't irrational or morally corrupt." I note in passing that editor James Nuechterlein and the former editor of *Commentary*, Norman Podhoretz, both indubitably conservative, also opposed removing Clinton from office because it would be too disruptive and polarizing. But this is a Catch-22 situation. If sixty-seven or more Senators had voted to remove him, the action obviously would not have been dangerously polarizing. The prospect of removal was so polarizing only because Democrats (including some who publicly said he was guilty as charged) marched in partisan lockstep toward a predetermined acquittal.

Returning to Paul Gigot, he writes: "Voters weren't saying they share Mr. Clinton's morals. They were saying this President isn't much worse than most politicians, all of whom they mistrust. Throw in the public's ambivalence toward sexual harassment charges, and Mr. Clinton's survival seems preordained. The miracle is that he got himself impeached." Of the readiness of Weyrich and others to throw in the towel, Gigot says, "This tendency always exists on the religious right, which cares more about salvation in the next world than in

this one. They tuned out at least once earlier this century, after the Scopes trial.” One rather hopes that they care more about salvation in the next world, and one notes that Weyrich, although his constituency is largely evangelical Protestant, is an Eastern Rite Catholic. But Gigot’s point stands. There is in fundamentalist-evangelical Christianity, as among some Catholic traditionalists, an apocalyptic temper conducive to hyperbolic renderings of both successes and defeats. It is a very unconservative conservatism.

“Conservatives,” Gigot concludes, “used to understand that all political change is slow, that in fact it ought to be slow, and that the task of political persuasion is never done. Russell Kirk, who forgot more about American culture than Mr. Weyrich remembers, liked to say that ‘There are no lost causes because there are no gained causes.’ Conservatives can’t save America by becoming anti-American.” (Actually, it is Kirk quoting T. S. Eliot, but that point, too, stands.) Similar arguments are made within the worlds of evangelical Protestantism. Charles Colson, for instance, writing in the mainline evangelical publication, *Christianity Today*: “On all sides I hear battle-weary evangelicals talk about abandoning cultural engagement and tending our own backyard instead. I can’t imagine anything more self-defeating, or more ill-timed, for two reasons. First, it is unbiblical. Scripture calls us to bring Christ’s redemption to all of life; despair is a sin. Second, to leave the cultural battlefield now would be to desert the cause just when we are on the verge of making a historic breakthrough. I believe John Paul II is exactly right in predicting that the year 2000 will usher in ‘a great springtime for Christianity.’”⁸

Colson cites a number of evidences that “the tide is turning in the culture war”—including declining rates of divorce, abortion, births to unwed teens, people on welfare, and crime. As to ideas, it is clear that the false gods have failed. “The only remaining ‘ism’ is postmodernism, which is not an ideology but . . . the admission that every attempt to construct a comprehensive, utopian worldview has failed. It is a formalized expression of despair.” Knowing his evangelical audience, Colson’s conclusion is not untouched by the above-mentioned hyperbole: “The dawn of the new millennium is a time for Christians to celebrate, to blow trumpets and fly the flag high. To desert the field of battle now would be historical blindness, betraying our heritage just when we have the greatest opportunity of the century. This is the time to make a compelling case that Christianity offers the only rational and realistic hope for both personal redemption and social renewal.” No dropping out there.

An Obituary for Outrage

Among conservative intellectual heavyweights,

few carry more weight than William J. Bennett. Seven months into the Monica Lewinsky phase of the continuing chronicles of the Clinton scandal, he published *The Death of Outrage: Bill Clinton and the Assault on American Ideals*. The book is an exemplary instance of the venerable genre of the jeremiad, made more effective by his fair-minded statement of opposing arguments. Bennett’s conclusions, however, offer naught for our comfort. “What explains this seeming public indifference toward, and even acceptance of, the President’s scandals? The explanations most often put forth include very good economic times; scandal fatigue; the fact that a tawdry sexual relationship makes people queasy; the President’s hyperaggressive, relentless, and effective spin team; the inclination to withhold judgment until more facts are known or give the President the benefit of the doubt; the fact that there are few leaders in any realm (religious, business, and the academy among them) who have articulated the case against the President; and the fact that Republican leadership—the Loyal Opposition—has been quiescent and inconsistent in its comments about the Clinton scandal, apparently afraid of voter backlash. These are plausible explanations. And still. I cannot shake the thought that the widespread loss of outrage against this President’s misconduct tells us something fundamentally important about our condition. Our commitment to long-standing ideals has been enervated. We desperately need to recover them, and soon. They are under assault.”

Bennett wants to resist the thought, but he is inclined to believe that this is a moment of truth about who we are as a people. “When, rocked with serious, credible allegations of grave misconduct and violations of law, the President retreated for as long as he could to a gilded bunker, obstinately and ‘absolutely’ unwilling to rebut troubling allegations made against him. And the history books may describe how a diffident public, when confronted with all the evidence of wrongdoing and all the squalor, simply shrugged its shoulders. And, finally, that William Jefferson Clinton really was the representative man of our time, when the overwhelming majority of Americans no longer believed that presidential character mattered, and that no man, not even a President, was accountable to the law.”

Seven months later, after the impeachment and Senate acquittal, Bill Bennett publicly opined that he had been forced to the conclusion that his most doleful analysis had been vindicated, that he has for years been wrong about the American people, that maybe he was simply out of touch. In a *Wall Street Journal* article he reviews again the arguments offered to exculpate the American people, and he finds them wanting.⁹ “These wishful assertions do not square with reality,” he says. Restating the

articles of indictment against a nation that has lost its capacity for outrage, he writes, "These are unpleasant things to realize. But it is the way things are, and it is always better to accept reality than merely wish it away. . . . There is no escaping the fact that Bill Clinton's Year of Lies—told and retold, not believed but accepted—has been an ignoble moment for a great people." In his book, Bennett spoke frequently about "we"—meaning we Americans. But at one point in the book he slips: "We—and by 'we' I mean in the first instance the political class itself—need to reclaim some of the high purpose of politics." There, I believe, he slips into a truth that deserved more attention in his diagnosis. The political class, including political intellectuals inside the beltway, should not be confused with the American people. The political class—notably congressional Democrats who unanimously and shamelessly defended a President whom, one must assume, most of them knew to be guilty of removable offenses—is deserving of Bennett's outrage. Of course, such politicians calculated that the voters would let them get away with what they did. But that is a somewhat different question, to which I will return. It may also turn out to have been a grave political miscalculation.

The Media Made Us Do It

It is not only conservatives who say that this has been a moment of truth revealing some unpleasant facts about the kind of people we have become. Since liberals generally defended Clinton, at least by opposing impeachment and conviction, they, unlike Bennett, do not take that as an indication of moral turpitude. Many blame the year of horrors on the media. The media made us do it. That is the suggestion of Lewis Lapham, the editor of *Harper's*, for example.¹⁰ His wrap-up reflection is portentously titled "Exorcism," and he begins with the line from *Troilus and Cressida*: "Take but degree away, untune that string. And, hark, what discord follows!" The electronic media, says Lapham, have untuned the string of public reason. Citing Marshall McLuhan as his authority, Lapham asserts that the habits of mind derived from the electronic media have deconstructed the texts of civilization founded on the print media, which leads him to the thought that "maybe the argument at the root of the impeachment trial was epistemological, not moral." Well, that's a relief, assuming we can get our epistemology straight.

But, of course, Lapham is on to something about the electronic media, and he puts it nicely: "Sympathetic to a pagan rather than a Christian appreciation of the world, the camera sees but doesn't think; it cares only for the sensation of the moment, for any tide of emotion strong enough to draw a paying crowd. A plane crash in the mountains of Peru commands the same slack-jawed

respect as Mick Jagger in a divorce court, Monica Lewinsky eating Belgian chocolate, cruise missiles falling on Baghdad." And there is more: "Because the camera doesn't know how to make distinctions—between treason and fellatio, between the moral and the amoral, between an important Senator and an important ape—its insouciance works against the operative principle of a democratic republic. Such a government requires of both its politicians and its citizens a high degree of literacy, also a sense of history, and, at least in the American context, an ethics derived from the syllabus of the Bible. None of those requirements carry any weight in the Kingdom of the Eternal Now governed by the rule of images. Bring narrative to Jay Leno, or hierarchy to Howard Stern, and you might as well be speaking Homeric Greek."

Lapham covers his political backside by describing the impeachment as an "attempt at political assassination dressed up in the rhetoric of high-minded conscience." Yet he seems to be not entirely without sympathy for the congressional Republicans who "objected to the society's order of value and wished to overturn it." But in the kingdom of the camera and celebrity, it is simply too late for that. Since they couldn't impeach the electronic culture, it is understandable that conservatives turned on Clinton. "Who better to bear the blame for everything else that has gone so badly wrong in the once happy land of Christian print?" Henry Hyde's concluding speech was "a prayer for the safe return of an imaginary American past, and when he finished, the nearly perfect silence in the Senate chamber again brought to mind the ritual stillness of a world out of time. For a long moment none of the Senators moved in their chairs, and in the press gallery skepticism was temporarily in short supply. The evening news broadcasts cut the scene to what seemed like a very long twenty seconds." McLuhan was right. Get used to it.

Lapham's reading resonates with Neil Postman's amusing and depressing book on the electronic media, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. Many commentators on the Clinton affair, on both the left and right, come back to the supposedly omnipotent media. Against that explanation, it is pointed out that the yellow and feverishly partisan papers of a century ago were hardly more conducive to calm deliberation. But the news came more slowly then, and the positions advocated, no matter how partisan, had a modicum of continuity. And surely there is a very big difference between reading and looking at the tube, a difference that I have no doubt does something devious to our minds. Yet the electronic media are not omnipotent, and we let ourselves off the hook by thinking otherwise. Were it up to the television networks—and almost all the prestige print media, for that matter—many things would have been very different in recent history; for

instance, Reagan and Bush would never have been President, we would not have prevailed in the Cold War, and there would certainly be no pro-life movement.

In addition, the network audience is fast decreasing, and I am among those who believe that the Internet and the multiplication of cable channels, among other things, hold high promise also for public life. Those who fret about a fragmentation that precludes the possibility of a "national conversation" about great issues are usually those who thought they were in charge of national conversations. Apart from times of real crisis, such as a real war, the things that matter do not require a national conversation. To the extent there has been a national conversation about what to do with the miscreant in the White House, it has been pretty much controlled by the people who think they are in charge of national conversations. Had the conversation been more tightly controlled, things would have turned out more or less the way they did, except he would never have been impeached in the first place.

Who Is Responsible?

It is, I believe, dead wrong to reify (if I may borrow the Marxist term) "the media" as though it were a collective agent doing this or doing that. It compounds the wrong to identify the media with the culture. Of course, we fall into these errors because we want to talk about the culture and "the American people" but nobody can talk *with* the culture or *with* the American people. All of us have only ourselves and a handful of other people with whom we can talk, even if our friends are intellectuals who are forever talking about the culture and the American people. So people listen to the people whom people in the media have certified as experts on the culture and the American people. There is no doubt that in the last year there has been a further degrading of the media and what it excretes into the general culture. We did not before have prime-time discussions of fellatio, gropings, and semen-stained dresses. Referring to reports on what Clinton does in the office, a mother in my parish remarked, "I'm tired of my kids asking me about 'oval sex.'" Pornographer and (according to his daughter) child molester Larry Flynt, who pornographers complain has given pornography a bad name, appears on supposedly reputable talk shows to share his ponderings on the nation's changing mores. And it is surely no coincidence that in the same year *60 Minutes* decides to broadcast a snuff film in which Dr. Kevorkian kills one of his "patients." That's not all. I am puzzled that there has not been more discussion of Bob Dole's commercials for Pfizer about how Viagra helps him cope with his erectile dysfunction. The poor fellow looks like he's restraining the impulse to unzip and show us the

happy change. Longtime Senate majority leader, former presidential candidate. Does anyone remember the last time "statesman" was used with reference to a political leader? Dole's nervous claim that the subject of his "dysfunction" should not be embarrassing only increases the embarrassment.

Such things did not appear in the mainstream media before. They are a distinct contribution of the Clinton presidency. It is not the media, and certainly not the culture, that decided to define deviancy down. Individual people with names did that. Larry King and Peter Jennings invited Larry Flynt. Mike Wallace, a proponent of euthanasia, favored showing the snuff film, as did his producer, who calculated, correctly, that it would give the program a boost during ratings week. Bob Dole, and presumably his wife, decided to go public with his difficulty. A depressing thought is that, whether Clinton or Dole had won in 1996, the public might have been required to contemplate presidential private parts. Would Dole be publicizing his if Clinton had not publicized his? I don't know the answer to that. Perhaps there is a political purpose in the Dole commercials, aimed at demonstrating the relative innocence of Republican dysfunctions. In any event, while these vulgarities assault the public, they tell us little or nothing about the American character. They tell us a great deal about individuals in leadership sectors who have abandoned the canons of taste and decency, with Bill Clinton being the chief culprit. And of course they could, in time, have a significant effect on the American character as the country is dragged down to the level of its putative leadership.

On a certain afternoon twenty-plus years ago, somebody at *Penthouse* decided that the centerfold would exhibit the whole works. More recently on cable television, somebody decided that the f-word is now okay. This is known as the artistic creativity of challenging taboos. For decades Hollywood worried about popular backlash and used the Legion of Decency and the Hays Office to take the rap for prudery. But that was when the great majority of Americans went to movies at least once a month. Then a new movie was part of something like a national conversation; at least it seemed everybody was aware of it, just as they talked about Fibber McGee and Molly, or repeated the Jack Benny jokes from last night's show. That was a long time ago, when there were depressions, wars, and other crises concentrating the popular mind. Now there is peace (more or less), prosperity, two hundred cable channels, and the Internet, while less than 10 percent of the people go to movies regularly, and they are free to choose their elixir or their poison. Nothing is national, everything is niched. The office of the presidency, apart from the Super Bowl, is maybe the last popularly recognized "national thing." When Bill Clinton took the office of the presidency on

MTV and answered questions about his underwear, that is something that Bill Clinton did. It was not done by the American people; it was done to them. Many Americans loved it. There have always been a lot of slobes. Clinton's innovation is in pandering to them. Earlier Presidents felt some obligation to maintain the dignity of a national office, even to exemplify national standards. Clinton has niched the national thing that was the presidency, and niched it very low.

As for what this tells us about the American character, remember the patient being given the Rorschach test and the psychiatrist tells him he has a dirty mind. "What do you mean?" he responds. "You're the one with the dirty pictures." In this case the patient is right. Michiko Kakutani on Andrew Morton's book, *Monica's Story*: "Its obsessive account of teenage shenanigans, its tiresome prattling about sex and self-esteem, its therapeutic jargon and Judith Krantz prose sadly sum up the sorry state of affairs our culture has reached," and so forth.¹¹ As Tonto might have said to the Lone Ranger, "What do you mean *our* culture?" David Brooks of the *Weekly Standard*, to whose erratic analyses I will return, writes of Barbara Walters' interview of Monica: "The world we've been peering into is somehow beyond good and evil. It's a world of sentimentality, of makeovers, of people who tear up just before the commercial breaks, and then return with uplifting visions of a life with family by show's end." He cites the philosopher Vico, whom he says he does not understand, and who "maintained that each civilization gets the dramas it deserves." "The Greeks got terrifying and grand tragedies. We're more forgiving, more comfortable, and more bourgeois. And so we get, in the perils of Monica Lewinsky, a night of pretty engaging television, which we'll probably all have forgotten by next week."¹² He's right about not understanding Vico, and wrong about this being the drama our civilization deserves. It is a subculture "we've been peering into." More accurately, people watch with fascinated disgust as an unstoppable toilet backs up into their living room.

There are those who know such things should not happen, and even plumbers who used to fix matters when they did. The *New York Times*, for instance, the old gray lady of public rectitude. But that was a long time ago. For some years now she has been telling us to get used to the backup—in the form of transgressive art, obscenity as free speech, gay sex, and, of course, the unlimited license to kill unborn children. But the Clinton eruption momentarily startled her into sobriety. She had some very severe things to say about his behavior. An editorial of September 12, 1998, declared that, until the Starr report, "no citizen—indeed, perhaps no member of his own family—could have grasped the completeness of President Clinton's mendacity or

the magnitude of his recklessness." Clinton will be remembered "for the tawdriness of his tastes and conduct" and for producing "a crisis of surreal complexity." Then, most ominously, "A President without public respect or congressional support cannot last."

Public Deliberation, So to Speak

But, of course, the *Times* opposed impeachment, and when he was impeached, opposed conviction. How Clinton would be given a pass was signaled in the same editorial. "He and we must await not only the adjudication of Congress, but the even more potent process of public deliberation." Ah, yes, the venerable process of public deliberation, meaning the spin on tomorrow's news and the omnipotent polls. Why do people in the media so bridle when it is pointed out that 90 percent of them voted for Bill Clinton, and that it would be remarkable to the point of incredible if their political bias did not affect their reporting? The liberal commentariat, it is true, said harsh things about him. While there were other spins, such as a long *Newsday* story that told "a political parable" of Bill Clinton cast as Jesus persecuted by the Republican Pharisees,¹³ the media, more typically, took FDR's tack: "He may be an S.O.B., but he's our S.O.B."

The analogy with Shakespeare's Coriolanus is apt, except of course that he was a genuine hero. Like Coriolanus, Clinton contemptuously manipulated the hoi polloi: "I will practice the insinuating nod, and be off to them most counterfeitedly; that is, sir, I will counterfeit the bewitchment of some popular man, and give it bountiful to the desirers" (Act II, iii). From 1992 on, the reporters were in on the game; they saw the wink and the nudge, and entertained one another with the feats of their man, "Slick Willy." Then, quite abruptly, in January 1998, they became the game. He was dealing with *them* most counterfeitedly, and they were furious. Not furious enough, however, to abandon their S.O.B. Not all were prepared to go so far as Nina Burleigh of *Time* magazine. "I'd be happy," she said, "to give him [oral sex] just to thank him for keeping abortion legal."¹⁴ But most were prepared to circle the wagons against the attacking neo-Puritans, while letting Clinton know in no uncertain terms that they were not at all happy about his forcing them to defend the indefensible.

The battle metaphor is no exaggeration in describing the never to be underestimated hysteria of the left. Mrs. Clinton set the tone when, immediately after the Lewinsky scandal broke, she went on television to talk about a "vast right-wing conspiracy" that has long been out to get them. Ken Starr is a "politically motivated prosecutor who is allied with the right-wing opponents of my husband. . . . It's—it's not just one person, it's an entire operation. . . . I don't think there's any doubt

that there are professional forces on the right at work for their own purposes and profit. There are just so many curious relationships among a lot of people, and various institutes and entities. And I think that that deserves thorough investigation. . . . There's just a lot going on behind the scenes and kind of under the radar screen that I think the American public has a right to know."¹⁵

A vast conspiracy requiring thorough investigation. McCarthyism, anyone? But, unlike any public figure who might allege a vast left-wing conspiracy, she was not asked to name names, to put up or shut up. Bennett observes, "Mrs. Clinton's charges are either intentionally preposterous or unintentionally paranoid." Undoubtedly they were calculated, and, while I don't know how intentionality enters into it, paranoid is an apt term for a large number of people on the left who seem earnestly to believe that they are the last and desperate defense against Fascist jack boots and the midnight knock on the door. McCarthyism would get mentioned quite a bit in the subsequent months, but it was the "sexual McCarthyism" of the neo-Puritan Fascists. (Terminology tended to get awfully muddled in "the potent process of public deliberation.")

At impeachment time, artists and intellectuals rallied at New York University.¹⁶ The persecution of Clinton has "all the legitimacy of a coup d'état," said novelist E. L. Doctorow. Toni Morrison, Elie Wiesel, Arthur Miller, that most distinguished historian Arthur Schlesinger, and hundreds of others cheered. "Vietnam is almost the last moment I can think of until now when intellectuals, writers, and artists have really raised their voices in a chorus of protests," said novelist William Styron. Happy days are here again. "There's the smell of brimstone in the air," warned legal philosopher Ronald Dworkin, sending a frisson of terror through the crowd. Todd Gitlin, loyal archivist of radicalisms past (but not past enough), opined, "For years, the intellectual left has been deeply divided over identity politics. Here's an issue on which they can agree, and there's relief."

Harvard's Alan Dershowitz had his own distinctive contribution to the solemn process of public deliberation: "A vote against impeachment is not a vote for Bill Clinton. It is a vote against bigotry. It's a vote against fundamentalism. It's a vote against anti-environmentalism. It's a vote against the right-to-life movement. It's a vote against the radical right. This is truly the first battle in a great culture war. And if this President is impeached, it will be a great victory for the forces of evil—evil—genuine evil." Then there was actor Alec Baldwin on *Late Night with Conan O'Brien*: "I'm thinking to myself if we were in other countries, we would all right now go down to Washington and we would stone Henry Hyde to death! . . . And we would go to their homes [Congressmen who vote for

impeachment] and we'd kill their wives and children. We would kill their families."¹⁷ The usual sources warning us against the horrors of "hate speech" were strangely silent.

Back at the NYU rally, feminist intellectual Blanche Wiesen Cook declared: "We are looking at theocrats. We have to mobilize like we mobilized against the war in Vietnam, like we mobilized against slavery. This is about race! This is about crack cocaine in the neighborhoods!" Right. By the time retired Episcopal bishop Paul Moore got his turn, one might have thought that all the apocalyptic imagery had been used up, but the bishop rose to the occasion: "I think of the millions and millions of people who will suffer and die because the Republicans want to get President Clinton for a personal sin."¹⁸ Writing in the *New Republic*, John B. Judis deplored the "extreme" language used by the proponents of impeachment who were "turning the factional struggle into a crusade." Conservatives, he observed, were like the Salem witchhunters and Joe McCarthy in their fanatical opposition to everything associated with the sixties and represented by Clinton—"feminism, free love, Unitarianism, bilingualism, drugs, abortion, and rock 'n' roll."¹⁹ Clinton's Unitarianism is a really big issue on the right.

But perhaps it was Elie Wiesel, the survivor of unspeakable horrors past and icon of moral gravity, who was most impressive. Told that Henry Hyde had argued that, when people abandon the rule of law, they invite tyranny, including terrors such as the Third Reich, Wiesel exploded: "My God, how dare he!" Clearly Mr. Hyde was infringing upon Mr. Wiesel's copyrighted piece of history. "What a comparison to make!" declared Wiesel. "Do you use the Holocaust to describe this affair?" Well, as it turns out, yes you do. It seems that people such as Mr. Hyde who insist upon the letter of the law are the real Nazis. "It *was* the law to put Jews in concentration camps, to kill them," Wiesel expostulated.²⁰ And so continued "the potent process of public deliberation."

Empty from the Start

Moral bankruptcy is an overused term, but nothing better comes to mind to describe the circumstance of the left in its Faustian bargain with Bill Clinton. The rhetoric of moralistic excitements is there, but it is devoid of substance. From the beginning it was not only the feminists turning a blind eye to "bimbo eruptions." Remember the remarkable case of Rickey Ray Rector, a young black man in Arkansas who killed a policeman and then turned his gun on himself, blowing out part of his brain. In early 1992, then-Governor Clinton, in order to show that he was tough on crime, flew home from New Hampshire just in time to deny him a stay of execution. Rector, who functioned with the mind

of a five-year-old, had to be lifted to his feet to walk to the death chamber. With no trace of irony, Rickey Ray asked the guards to say hello to Gov. Clinton, whom he had just seen on television, and said they should save the piece of pecan pie which he planned to eat when he got back. A young black man. A mentally disabled young black man. All of this was well publicized at the time. The left, overwhelmingly and passionately opposed to capital punishment, was quiet. After all, what choice did they have? It was either Bill Clinton or the Fascists.

Terms such as preposterous and paranoid are appropriate. But the fact is that much of the left does believe that conservatives are but the cat's-paw of the Gestapo waiting in the wings. Many conservatives hate Bill Clinton. Liberals, generally speaking, hate conservatives. Dennis Prager puts it well: "Conservative hatred for President Clinton has often been ugly, and I for one have never taken part in it. But it was directed primarily against one man. Liberal hatred is directed toward millions of fellow Americans—non-liberals, especially religious ones. Indeed, it is almost impossible to debate important issues with many liberal spokesmen because opposing the liberal position opens a person to charges of evil: opposition to race- and sex-based affirmative action means one is racist and sexist; opposition to abortion renders one a misogynist; opposition to same-sex marriage means a person is homophobic; and on and on."²¹ "Where is the outrage?" asked Bob Dole in 1996. It was there. But it was shouted by the outrage directed against those outraged by Bill Clinton. The loudest shouters with the biggest bullhorns belong to the left that has largely succeeded in its "long march through the institutions." The winners of Nobel and Pulitzer prizes rally at NYU, not in Colorado Springs, Colorado. They have nothing but contempt for the "process of public deliberation." How could you trust a public that includes millions upon millions, perhaps even a majority, of conservatives? They elected Reagan, didn't they? There's no telling what they would do next time, if given half a chance.

Some conservatives have remarked that the one good thing to come out of all this is the total demolition of radical feminism. I would not bet on it. True, Gloria Steinem was not bothered by Clinton's groping of a distressed supporter in the Oval Office because, she explained, Clinton finally took No as an answer. This became known as Steinem's One Free Grope Rule. And true that Betty Friedan said that, even if Clinton did everything he's accused of doing, and more, "It's no big deal." The rape charge did shake some loyalists such as the *Washington Post's* Richard Cohen: "Take the rape charge. It is that—get it? I feel I have to emphasize it: the President of the United States is accused of raping a woman back when he was attorney general of Arkansas. An account of this alleged rape ran on

Page 1 of the Washington Post. Get it? Page One! The Washington Post! Do you want to know what happened next? Nothing." He concludes, "The Clintons play by no rules. They have vanquished outrage."²² But what could outrage do, even if there were more and undeniably credible charges of this nature? He can't be impeached again, and statutes of limitation have a way of running out. Feminism's hypocrisy is exposed, but feminists letting Clinton off the hook does not undo feminism's damage. Ideologically skewed sexual harassment laws are still harassing thousands of men in the courts and military tribunals. And maybe it is not fair to speak of feminist hypocrisy. They have not disguised the fact that, at the end of the day, their cause is about one uncompromisable, don't-give-an-inch thing: "reproductive rights." On that one thing Bill Clinton has kept his word. He is their S.O.B.

This You Will Not Believe

I will not go into detail about the dishonesty and confusion about the polls. Cohen reflects the conventional wisdom: "How can it be . . . that with every outrage, Clinton rises higher and higher in the polls? The rape charge ought to put him about where Roosevelt was for ending the Great Depression and beating the Axis powers." I don't believe it for a minute. Of those familiar with the rape accusation by Juanita Broaddrick, 62 percent said it is likely true and 20 percent said it is likely not true. By the end of February, 40 percent had a "generally favorable" view of Bill Clinton, the lowest number recorded to date.²³ But even if that falls to 20 percent, what are those who hold him in understandable contempt supposed to do? Storm the White House and throw him out physically? In his public appearances he is carefully distanced from protesters by all the security that becomes the majesty of his august office. Anyway, as Dale Bumpers would undoubtedly say, it's only a matter of another year and a half. Plus, storming buildings and disrupting meetings is not what conservatives ordinarily do.

As to what "The American People" really think, read again Robert Jensen's article of that title in the April issue. The American people have been and, God willing, will be around for a long time. They are not instantiated in responses to a telephone poll that interrupted the watching of a basketball game, or by a question asked as they're leaving the mall. Yes, it is objected, but the polls are generally accurate about many things, such as predicting who people will vote for. Good for the polls. What does that have to do with what people think about marital fidelity, adultery, lying under oath, rape, and the meaning of "high crimes and misdemeanors"? About some of these things people think very deeply in ways that cannot be caught by a polling question; about others they have not

thought at all, which does not prevent them from having an “opinion” to be registered. Take your own poll. How many fathers (apart from Monica’s) think it is okay for a fifty-year-old man to do that with their twenty-one-year-old daughter? How many wives would put up with their husbands doing it? Of course Clinton and his clique have defined deviancy down, but is there really any evidence that a substantial number of people have in their own lives *bought into that definition*? Among the more egregiously delinquent, there are no doubt some who are pleased to know that the President is no better than they are. Many others have come to expect less of this President, and maybe of politicians in general, which is not all bad.

It is not true that The American People “knew what they were getting” when they elected him in 1992 and again in 1996. Richard Cohen of the *Washington Post* again: “Here is a President who has been like no other. If I told you three years ago—even two years ago—that the President was having sex in the Oval Office with a young intern, you would not have believed me. In fact, I would not have believed it myself. The rumors, I thought, were the work of his worst enemies—crazies, mentally unstable.” And so with sex-stained dresses, and keeping Yassir Arafat waiting or chatting with Congressmen on the phone while being serviced by Monica. And now rape. If he had reported such things, says Cohen, “You would have called me deranged, a perverted pundit. No one does that.” Yet it all happened. “You can look any of this up. But you could not make any of this up.” Cohen is being slightly disingenuous. He is paid to pay attention, and anyone who paid attention knows that Clinton lied about Gennifer Flowers back in 1992. It’s on the tape. But that was followed by *60 Minutes* with Clinton’s admission of troubles in the past; he and Hillary eyed each other lovingly and promised ever so earnestly that they would be worthy of the high office to which they aspired. It is not to the discredit of the minority of Americans who voted for him that they wanted to give him the benefit of the doubt. They turned out to be wrong, of course. They did not know what they were getting.

Pulpit Prophecy and Pandering

A question persistently asked through all of this, especially by Clinton opponents, was, “Where are the voices of religious leadership?” I was asked that again and again, and was a little puzzled about what people expected from religious leaders. I would quote my bishop, John Cardinal O’Connor, who said on several occasions that he really did not think there was much public suspense about where the Catholic Church stood on adultery and lying. But that never satisfied those who pressed the question. They apparently thought clergy should be leading the outcry against presidential perfidy, issuing

jeremiads that rattled the rafters and brought the miscreant to book. There is no way of knowing for sure, but I expect that in most of the hundreds of thousands of local pulpits in America the subject of presidential misconduct was addressed more or less directly, and probably more than once. In many instances, no doubt, to illustrate the point that we are all sinners in need of forgiveness, in many others to underscore that we should not be “judgmental,” and in yet others to emphasize the general decadence of the culture. Most clergy likely thought it was not their business to prescribe what ought to be done about the prodigal President; that was a job for the politicians. From many black pulpits and from the more overtly political pulpits of white liberals, of course, the President was vigorously defended against his alleged persecutors.

Shortly after the Lewinsky ignominy was exposed in January 1998, and before Clinton partisans were able to organize the spiking of the initial outrage, Peter Steinfels of the *Times* put the question this way: “When it comes to questions of morality and public life, sex and power, honesty and the law, friendship and trust, personal conduct and political responsibility, the right to know and the right to privacy, why do the views of historians, psychologists, political scientists, lawyers, lawyers, and, of course, the news media’s pundits so overshadow those of religious leaders?”²⁴ Steinfels offered a number of possible explanations. For one thing, clergy understand themselves to be more in the business of forgiving than condemning, and are especially reluctant to condemn when all the facts aren’t known and there is strong skepticism about the media that is reporting the facts. “Clergy want to keep their distance from politically partisan preachers and super-righteous [he means self-righteous] radio hosts. It could be that the aggressiveness of the religious right has actually made it harder rather than easier for many religious leaders to address politically charged moral issues.” Then, too, says Steinfels, clergy may have plenty to say but reporters and editors aren’t asking them to say it. Or it may be that, despite the vitality of religion in the private lives of most Americans, “it has lost its institutional power as a social force.”

An important factor in the relative absence of clerical expressions of outrage is that there was no real public dispute about the gross immorality of what Clinton had done. It was not necessary to call in moral experts to certify that his behavior was outrageous. Even many of his sycophants were outspoken in deploring his shamelessness, recklessness, infidelity, habitual mendacity, and related moral deficiencies. The question of what was to be done about it quickly became a political and legal question. Part of the political equation was to determine whether Clinton was appropriately contrite, at which point the clergy were invited in to

certify the state of his soul.

Not all the sycophants, of course, were candid about the President's wrongdoing. The Rev. J. Philip Wogaman, a very liberal Democrat, professor of Christian ethics, and pastor of Foundry Methodist where the Clintons attend, wrote a little book, *From the Eye of the Storm* (Westminster). There it is suggested that Clinton is the victim of a Western history deeply conflicted about sexuality. Maybe our outrage should be directed not at Clinton but at, for instance, St. Augustine. "Augustine's own sexual history may also have contributed a discordant note to our culture today. He may have made it more difficult for subsequent generations to see the intrinsic goodness of sex when it is expressed in loving commitment," etc. Or perhaps the buck stops even higher up. With respect to sexual ethics, Wogaman asks, "Was Jesus placing an utterly impossible standard before us?" He answers, "Maybe so." But then, letting Jesus off the hook, he adds, "Somehow I do not think Jesus was so much asking us to struggle against feelings that are built into our human nature as he was reinforcing the message about hypocrisy. Do not be so quick to condemn people for doing what you have *wanted* to do!" Somehow I think the Rev. Wogaman has overlooked, among other distinctions, the difference between being tempted to sin and surrendering to temptation.

But "the deepest question of all," says Wogaman, is this: "Do we ultimately define ourselves as a community based on law, or is there a deeper sense in which we are a community of mutual caring?" If we are a nation defined by law, Wogaman allows, Clinton "must be removed either through forced resignation or impeachment." But "we are a society that should understand itself more deeply as a community of love than as a community of law." Not that law and love are "incompatible," but insisting upon obedience to the law is "the spirit of legalism [that] is at odds with community and love." One must sympathize with the theology students, as well as the congregants of Foundry, who are exposed to a steady diet of such sentimental drivel. And be grateful that the Constitution of laws given us by the Framers has not yet been replaced by liberalism's Constitution of Mutual Caring.

A religious voice heard regularly during the past year was that of the Rev. Joan Brown Campbell, general secretary of the National Council of Churches (NCC). That near-moribund institution was partially resuscitated in the nineties by its much publicized "access" to the Clinton White House, where most of its statements over these months might as well have been, if in fact they were not, drafted. The NCC's endless refrain was that the country should "move on" and let the President "get on with the job he was elected to do." Between that repeated refrain were imprecatory incantations

against the horrible conservatives who were violating the Constitution of Mutual Caring.

After the defeat of the impeachment effort in the Senate, Ms. Campbell joined with others, including the ordinarily sensible Senator Sam Brownback of Kansas, the ever-anguished acquitter Senator Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut, as well as Archbishop Justin Rigali of St. Louis and Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, who has his own interfaith organization, in discussing the merits of a national "Day of Reconciliation." Lamenting the divide between liberals and conservatives, Ms. Campbell said, "It's hard for us to be the ambassadors of reconciliation if we're locked into these camps." After her camp had, with exquisite mutual caring, trashed the other camp, she invites the vanquished to come on over. Reconciliation means promising not to gloat, or at least not very much.²⁵

Another old reliable was Father Robert Drinan of Georgetown Law School. Drinan is in some circles a hero of the Watergate episode in which, unlike the Democrats this time around, Republicans urged their President to do the decent thing and resign. In testifying to the House Judiciary Committee, Fr. Drinan lifted up the easily overlooked fine point of constitutional law that says that God will judge very harshly anybody who votes to impeach President Clinton. In a September 1998 article he argued that "no President has ever before spoken of his wrongdoings in such an impressive manner." In fact, no President has ever had occasion to speak about wrongdoings such as these in any manner at all. Like so many other Democrats noted for their fiscal frugality, Drinan was deeply distressed by the Starr investigation costing forty million dollars. And all it produced was "a tawdry tale of a President who, after at least twice trying to disengage himself from a star-struck intern, succumbed to temptation."

Were Clinton to resign or be removed, "the consequences would be enormous." Specifically, "It would imply that the Democrats not once but twice elected a very unworthy person to the White House." Clearly, the thought is simply not to be entertained. The "entirely new" thing in all these events, says Drinan, is "the President's public contrition." "It is gripping, it is astonishing, it resonates of Old Testament sinners who return to God. One commentator has suggested that a parent should not punish a child who has the level of repentance manifested by Clinton." Unfortunately, the people who want to punish the child President are "political animals who are most interested in their political survival and advancement." Thus did Fr. Drinan play the dual role of prophet consigning the persecutors to perdition and of priest welcoming home the prodigal son.²⁶

In February 1999, Clinton addressed the National Prayer Breakfast, an annual orgy of civil religion in

devotion to Americanism and a mostly unnamed God. He told the congregation of thousands that they should pray “for yourselves,” that we all be “purged of the temptation to pretend that our willfulness is somehow equal to God’s will.” He enjoined them to listen well to all the good things that had been said at the breakfast. Writer Peggy Noonan was there. “I thought: He’s talking to us as if he is a moral leader and we are the nice people being led. He’s providing moral instruction to a room full of ministers. Then I thought: And this is Bill Clinton!”²⁷

Noonan was not the only one who had doubts about Clinton’s contrition. After his disastrous televised “apology” of August 17, Clinton convened a clutch of clerics in the White House to testify to his being truly sorry. The National Association of Evangelicals declined the invitation, explaining: “NAE leadership decided no representative would attend the breakfast because there would not be an opportunity to express a prophetic voice. The paradigm of the Old Testament prophets was that they went to the palace to speak God’s word to the King with a call to repentance. . . . NAE did not relish the distinct possibility that it would be considered by the media as part of the President’s ‘amen corner.’”²⁸ The amen corner at the breakfast, however, was chock full of others who did not suffer such pangs of scrupulosity in certifying the sincerity with which the President felt his pain.

Andy Warhol said everybody gets fifteen minutes in the spotlight. Really big history-making events get half an hour. Clinton tries to look presidential as he stumbles through the rubble, and it is easy to forget that nine months ago and a year ago many thought he was finished. He is less “the comeback kid” and more the Energizer bunny that just keeps on going, more or less. More than 150 newspapers, some of them quite influential, had called for his resignation by last fall. But then the entire drama changed, turning to the impeachment hearings and Senate trial. That revised script had him either losing or winning, but he had already lost. Religious publications, for the most part, pulled their punches. The liberal *Christian Century* fretted about the quality of his contrition; the evangelical mainline *Christianity Today* said Clinton’s actions had “rendered this Administration morally unable to lead,” but stopped short of calling for resignation or removal; *America*, the Jesuit weekly, was in Clinton’s corner and expressed satisfaction that the bishops had remained largely silent during the entire affair.

In September, Bishop Anthony Pilla, then President of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, noted that what Clinton had done was wrong, but he “has indicated his sorrow over his behavior, his acceptance of blame, and his desire for healing.” As to his “accountability in terms of public

office,” Pilla said, “it is up to the constitutional process to determine the appropriate response.” Among Catholic moral theologians, Fr. David Hollenbach of Boston College was in the distinct minority calling for resignation or removal.²⁹

Robert Schuller of Crystal Cathedral in California was perceived to be close to Clinton in recent years in the White House, and in December concluded he should resign. “I ask that you look within your conscience and summon the will and strength to end this agony. By stepping aside, you can spare our nation weeks, perhaps months, of divisive debate and repulsive testimony. Your action can help restore public confidence in the moral fabric that sustains our form of government and the moral standards we have a right to demand in our leaders.”³⁰ Already by October the heads of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Reformed Church in America, and other denominational leaders, including some liberal Methodist bishops, had publicly called on Clinton to resign. On October 9, I was pleased to join many others in a most respectful letter to Clinton from religious leaders coordinated by the Institute on Religion and Democracy and laying out the reasons why he should resign. In sum, hundreds, if not thousands, of clergy of some national prominence publicly called for resignation or removal. This received almost no attention in the media and, of course, no response from the White House.

Resignation was, literally, unthinkable. All those who were thinking about it apparently did not exist in Bill Clinton’s mind. Once again, the autism kicks in. In the March 31, 1999, *60 Minutes II* interview, Dan Rather asks, “Did you ever consider resigning?” “Never.” “Never for a second?” “Never, not a second, never, never.” “Never entered your mind?” “Never entered my mind. . . . I wouldn’t do that to the Constitution. I wouldn’t do that to the presidency. I wouldn’t do that to the history of this country. I would never have legitimized what I believe is horribly wrong with what has occurred here over the last four or five years.” Note the time span—the last four or five years. We are back to the vast right-wing conspiracy that has been trying to get the Clintons all along.

That is the overarching explanation of what has happened, with Clinton being sorry that he made some personal mistakes that the conspirators were able to exploit. How does Clinton understand his role in all this? “I do not regard this impeachment vote as some great badge of shame,” he tells Rather. “I am honored that something that was indefensible was pursued and that I had the opportunity to defend the Constitution.” He alludes to “the great figures of the Bible” who also “did things they shouldn’t have done.” The Bible teaches that “everyone sins, but everyone is held accountable, and everyone has a chance to go on.” That, he says, is

what our children should learn from the past year and more. "Kids are pretty smart. And they—this is a good lesson, not a bad lesson for them."

Not only is he honored to have had an opportunity to defend the Constitution and to teach morality to America's children, but he also bears no grudges against his persecutors. "I realized that particularly in the last year, if I wanted people to give me forgiveness, I had to extend forgiveness. . . . And I have worked very hard at it. I have had very powerful examples. I look at a man like Nelson Mandela who suffered enormously." And so forth. This takes the breath away. It is crazily Christian in a surreal way, a moral jujitsu whereby he is more sinned against than sinner, but is prepared to forgive those who tried to hold him accountable for what he does. "Forgive them their trespasses as we forgive ours."

Judgment Day

In December, more than two hundred university and seminary teachers of religion signed a "Declaration Concerning Religion, Ethics, and the Crisis in the Clinton Presidency." This became the basis of a book, edited by Gabriel Fackre of Andover Newton, that will be an invaluable document for the study of this period, *Judgment Day at the White House* (Eerdmans). Essayists include Jean Bethke Elshtain, Max Stackhouse, Stanley Hauerwas, Fr. Matthew Lamb, and Don Browning. The declaration and most of the essayists did not explicitly call for Clinton's replacement, but did offer incisive criticism of the political manipulation of Christian themes of contrition and forgiveness. The book also has Wogaman-like opposing views by Nicholas P. Wolterstorff, Lewis Smedes, and Donald and Peggy Shriver. Also in opposition to the declaration is Glen Harold Stassen, who invokes the political wisdom of his father, the perennial presidential candidate, in understanding the role of morality in public life.

Of particular interest is an essay by Edward P. Wimberly of the Interdenominational Theological Center, Atlanta, from the viewpoint of "African-American pastoral theology." The overwhelming black support for Clinton, he observes, is similar to the pattern of "settling" among black women. That is, they don't expect much from a man and are glad to settle for what they can get. The "almost unanimous" support for Clinton, Wimberly says, is reinforced by his sharing "a small-town, folksy, rural style with black preachers and Southern white politicians." Nor does it hurt that he, too, depicts himself as a victim. He may be an S.O.B., but . . .

Judgment Day reprints a notable essay by Shelby Steele of Stanford University, "Baby-Boom Virtue," which is, I believe, helpful in understanding the moral confusions surrounding the Clinton debacle. His generation, says Steele, won its rebellion against

parents who defined virtue in terms of personal responsibility, largely in the sphere of family, work, and religion. The boomers subscribe to "virtue-by-identification." He quotes Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa who said last fall that "Clinton is a failed human being but a good President." Virtue-by-identification means virtue is not a matter of who you are but of what you stand for. Of the boomers Steele writes: "Thus, in the name of virtuousness that could redeem society and allow for our fulfillment, we created a new 'good' in which private moral responsibility was secondary, if not passé. . . . We created a virtuousness that could be achieved through mere identification."

It is a matter of identifying with the right causes and with those who identify with the right causes. "But iconography of this sort," Steele writes, "is even more effective in its negative mode." "Because it represents virtue, it also licenses demonization. Those who do not identify are not simply wrong; they are against virtue and therefore evil. Any politics of virtue is also a politics of demonization, and this has been a boomer specialty since the 1960s. . . . We could not have had a Bill Clinton without the generational corruption that allowed virtue to be achieved through mere identification." And, of course, there are elders who should know better but pander to the boomers. (On demonization, see Elie Wiesel et al. above.)

Generational generalizations such as Steele's are suggestive, but I continue to be disinclined to blame Bill Clinton or the failure to remove him from office on the American people, or even on the boomer generation. The liberal claim that conservatives in their disappointment have turned anti-American does not, Paul Weyrich and a few others notwithstanding, bear close examination. The January issue of *Commentary* asked seventeen prominent conservative thinkers whether, "read as a barometer of the national temper," the November elections and the reaction to the Clinton scandal tell us much about America. Among the questions asked was this: "What is your own sense of where, on moral matters, the public stands?" Six (including William Bennett) thought we had received bad news about the American character, one was undecided, and the ten others put the blame elsewhere, mainly on the ineptitude of Republican leaders. A month later, the *Weekly Standard* ran a similar symposium with twenty-one participants (two overlapping with the *Commentary* symposium) and the blame-America count, as I read it, is no more than five out of twenty-one.

There were so many things that went wrong, including the decision not to have a full trial with witnesses in the Senate. Earlier, there was Robert Livingston, on the eve of taking over as Speaker of the House, resigning because of his sexual misdeeds and calling on Clinton to do likewise. Livingston's

resignation was honorable, but the suggested parallel with Clinton undercut the Republican case that the question was not sexual misdeeds but the rule of law. Nor, most important, can one overlook the spectacle of Senate Democrats, some of whom were on record saying Clinton is guilty, many, if not most of whom, had made it clear they thought he should not be removed, and all of whom took the solemn vow to judge his case impartially. In brazen lockstep they voted to acquit. In *The Death of Outrage*, Bennett makes much of the fact that “we” were the kind of people who twenty-five years earlier forced Nixon to resign, but the “we” then included a large number of Republicans who put the integrity of the office before party. This time around, bolstered by the polls, Democrats felt no need to temper their partisanship.

“The System Worked”

In some quarters it is said that, at the end of the day, “the system worked.” Maybe so. In 1787 when the impeachment provision of the Constitution was being debated, Benjamin Franklin proposed that the President should be impeachable when he has “rendered himself obnoxious.” Had Franklin prevailed, we would have been spared all the talk about high crimes and misdemeanors. In a similar vein, British cousins such as Andrew Sullivan and James Bowman argued that in the parliamentary system Clinton would have been long gone. The American Framers, says Bowman, wanted a system that would, as much as possible, obviate the need for virtue, honor, and trust. The result is a President without virtue, honor, or trust. Bowman writes: “T. S. Eliot observed that the Socialist project was to design a system so perfect that no one would have to be good. The Socialists were anticipated by the Founders of the American Republic, whose aim was to design a system so well that honor would not have to be relied on. But, it turns out, we have to rely on it still.”³¹ That judgment of the constitutional order is not quite right. Washington, John Adams, and other Founders repeatedly said the system could not work without virtue, honor, and trust. They were so urgent in their warnings precisely because the system provided no remedy for the absence of those factors that cannot be secured by law.

While on the subject of honor, one cannot fail to mention Representative Henry Hyde, maybe the only politician who comes out of this with his stature enhanced. He was the adult on the Judiciary Committee while juvenile delinquents such as Barney Frank and John Conyers variously clowned and postured, making themselves and, they hoped, the proceedings look obnoxious. At one point Hyde said that he would catch hell no matter what he did, so he might as well do what is right. Apart from the clowns, even his opponents acknowledged, albeit sometimes grudgingly, his integrity. Paul Gigot got

it right: “As for Henry Hyde, he likes to joke that when he first came to Washington he wanted to change the world; now he just wants to leave the room with dignity. By impeaching a law-breaking President, he did both.”³²

The national character, however, was left with little dignity, according to some. Roger Kimball of the *New Criterion* thought Paul Weyrich was a bit overwrought. “But by and large I think it must be admitted that his unhappy diagnosis is right. At the deepest level—at the level of the culture’s taken-for-granted feelings and assumptions about what matters—the hedonistic, self-infatuated ethos of cultural revolution has triumphed to an extent unimaginable when it began.” He is especially exercised by an article by the erratic David Brooks in the *Weekly Standard*, arguing that the past year has demonstrated that American culture is in pretty good shape. “Today’s moral attitudes are anti-utopian,” Brooks wrote. “They are utilitarian. They are modest. They are, in fact, the values of the class the counterculture hated most. They are the values of the bourgeoisie.” Kimball calls Brooks’ article “an unashamed paean to philistinism,” and reminds Brooks that “what conservatives have traditionally championed were bourgeois *values*, not bourgeois vices.” What Brooks espouses “is not conservatism but a cheerful, buttoned-down version of the moral vacancy that Mr. Weyrich rightly laments.”³³

It Has Never Happened Before

Bennett, Weyrich, Kimball, Gertrude Himmelfarb, and a good many others have drawn such doleful conclusions, but I am not persuaded. So what have we learned from all this? One thing we have learned is what might happen if we had an MTV President. We never had one before. The political philosopher Leo Strauss liked to say that the American system was built on foundations that are low but solid. The Clinton presidency was built on foundations that are low and sordid. For all his successes in life, it seems that Bill Clinton as a person never rose above his origins. That is a difficult subject not untouched by the delicate question of class, but the fact is that Clinton plays to the pit. Maureen Dowd of the *Times*, who nonetheless opposed the impeachment, writes: “He campaigned and governed using lowbrow forums of popular entertainment . . . and now the lowbrow culture he cultivated has engulfed his presidency and, most likely, his legacy. Just as movie and television comedy is permeated with the ill-mannered, self-indulgent mentality of adolescent boys, Mr. Clinton has reversed the usual pattern of the presidency, switching from a paternal model to an adolescent model. He expects us to clean up, ignore, or forgive his messes. . . . You might call it a vast gross-out conspiracy.”³⁴

Lowbrow. As in lower class. It is a term deemed dangerously incorrect today, but it is a reality that

cannot be denied. Here it means not the economically poor but the morally impoverished. In the past we were more candid about the fact that a large number of people in any society, including this one, are moral slob. That recognition is key to Edward C. Banfield's brilliant 1968 analysis of social policy, *The Unheavenly City*. Once upon a time there were "our kind of people" and other kind of people. The better kind of people felt an obligation to help uplift the lesser breeds. Today the lesser breeds are victims and the better kind of people are the victimizers—or at least so our academic and media elites would convince us.

Of course the old way was marred by snobbery and hypocrisy, the inevitable attendants of any effort to maintain standards. It is not that people used to be more moral than they are now. Moral slobbery is, I expect, pretty evenly distributed through time and societies. In the nineteenth century, the better kind of people were aghast at the manners and mores of the immigrant hordes, mainly Catholics and Jews. But Banfield notes: "In Boston, which in 1817 had only about four hundred Catholics, the native American residents must have patronized the city's two thousand prostitutes (one for every six males above the age of sixteen), hundreds of liquor shops, and the gambling houses open night and day. It must also have been the native Bostonians who denied the mayor, Josiah Quincy, reelection after he waged a vigorous war on vice." Nothing daunted, Quincy and those like him embraced the unending task of elevating public standards.

Like none who held the office before him, the MTV President has exulted in playing to the pit in a populism not of policy but of appetite. In an orchestrated slander against a woman on whom Clinton tried to force himself, and with whom he later settled out of court for a huge sum, a Clinton media lackey spoke of the trash that turns up when you trawl money through a trailer park. It is a fitting image of this presidency, and the trailer park is not just Arkansas, for every state and every community has a subculture that wallows in being pandered to, even as the panderer wallows in their gratitude for his being one of them. Ronald Reagan started in Hollywood and lived it down by living up to the presidency. Bill Clinton's achievement is to be accepted by a Hollywood responsible for a meretricious popular culture to which he has defined down the presidency. With a wink and a nudge, the media and politics junkies went along with it for a long time, declaring him a political genius. Until it became evident that he viewed them, too, as trash to be trawled—and casually discarded when they would no longer play the game.

Over the year, as noted above, puzzlement was regularly expressed at Clinton's high ratings in the opinion polls. Playing low can keep the ratings high. A majority was agreeing with Senator Harkin

that Clinton is a failed human being but a good President—or at least that he is not so bad a President that he should be removed, or at least that he should not be removed for an adolescent sexual indulgence, or at the very least that he should not be forced out of office by those whom the nightly news portrayed as vicious partisans out to get him.

Moreover, put together the numbers: feminists and those intimidated by them, for whom the only issue is abortion; die-hard liberal Democrats and leftists on the commanding heights of culture for whom conservatism is pure evil; big labor, especially in education and other parts of the public sector, for whom the alternative to Clinton is catastrophe; and blacks who are pitifully grateful for the assurance that Master feels their pain. Add in the very large number of sensible Americans who found the whole thing repugnant and just wanted it to go away, and you ended up with those high "approval" ratings.

This, at least, is my reading of the Clinton squalor that consumed much of the attention of the nation and the world for more than a year. Now attention has turned to what I believe is the grievously misguided U.S.-NATO war in Serbia (see "The Clinton Era, At Home and Abroad" in last month's Public Square), and God only knows how that will end up. But the one thing we must not do is follow the counsel of those who say we should put behind us the impeachment and the events that precipitated it. It was a moment of important truth not just about this President and not chiefly about what is called the American character, but about the ways of public discourse, so to speak, about who we are and how we live now.

What happened beginning in January 1998 does not tell us much that is worth knowing about "the American people." The fact is that nothing like this has happened to us before. If it is allowed to happen again any time soon, we might have to reconsider the dark ponderings about the American character that have gained such currency. The most hopeful thought is that enough Americans have learned from this experience never again to entrust the presidency to a person of such reckless habits and suspect character. But that hope comes with no guarantee.

Meanwhile, we have a President who is guilty of perjury, witness tampering, the obstruction of justice, and sexual predation, including, it seems, at least one rape. Very likely there will be further charges, and possibly further crimes, in the months to come. But, in what is presented as the clinching argument of his loyalists, it's only for another year or so. Until somebody comes up with a better idea, the course of wisdom is to pray for the nation while averting our eyes as much as public duty permits from the sorry spectacle of a man stumbling through the rubble of what remains of a ruined presidency.

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- ³⁴ Dowd in *NYT*, August 2, 1998.

INDOMITABLE FAITH, WICKED WIT

It has now been some months since J. P. McFadden died, and I am embarrassed that we are so late with a tribute. (The bane of editors is people who don't write what they say they're going to write, but I'll leave it at that.) Jim was an extraordinary man of recklessly indomitable faith and wicked wit. He was for years variously involved in the publishing of *National Review* and wrote a scintillating, and sometimes scathing, newsletter, *catholic eye*. But the indispensable contribution was his founding of the *Human Life Review*, a scholarly quarterly that is, well, indispensable to anyone contending for the culture of life against the culture of death. Not incidentally, his daughter Maria, who is now the editor of *HLR*, was the first managing editor of this journal. Each month *catholic eye* was at the top of the pile marked for immediate reading. My friend George Weigel once said that he had for five years put it to the test: Was it possible to get through an issue of *catholic eye* without being forced to laugh out loud at least once? It wasn't. Jim was a master of that most delightfully insufferable form of humor, the pun. Of course I remember a personal reference best. Jim once watched a television exchange between myself and the "Ultramundane" (Jim's term for the type) Sister Maureen Fiedler. He wrote, "Neuhaus Romed while Fiedler burned."

The current issue of *HLR* has a number of well-deserved tributes to Jim, including his wife Faith's affecting description of their life together over the years he struggled with the cancer that finally did him in. Also republished is this fine statement by John T. Noonan, Jr., constitutional scholar, author, and federal judge on the Ninth Circuit. The

occasion was a 1979 testimonial dinner for Jim at the Union League Club, which was established in 1863 to support the Union cause and rid the country of the scourge of slavery. Noonan said, "The division in the country is analogous and the causes are similar: human liberty then, human life now." He continued:

And there has been the same great need for organization, direction, and projection of opinion on the right side. In the case of slavery, there was really only one organ of public opinion in New York, Horace Greeley's *Tribune*, which provided a forum in which antislavery thinking could find a national audience. In the case of abortion, Jim McFadden has given the cause of human life what it so badly wanted: a vigorous, articulate organ of opinion in which the many facets of the abortion issue could be analyzed and commented upon and debated. Abortion, and it has been apparent in the pages of this journal, is about as much a single-issue issue as a centipede is one-footed. Jim McFadden has also edited the liveliest, most newsworthy, and most invigorating newsletter, which has given life indeed to those of us engaged in a campaign which has often needed such encouragement and such invigoration. . . . I would compare him to Horace Greeley in providing a voice for a great cause neglected or caricatured in the establishment newspapers and journals. I would compare him, except that he has a stability and a modesty and a sense of human limitation which Greeley did not possess. . . . If he fights for man, it is not for the average hypothetical figure of the liberal politician. It is for the actual human beings who are united in his faith with Jesus.

redemptor hominis. His humanism is founded upon the God who took human flesh and frame in the womb of Mary. His life follows the law which Hopkins captured in the lines: "Our law says: Love what are love's worthiest, were all known; World's loveliest—men's selves. Self flashes off frame and face." It is in response to these actual human beings, their frames, their faces, that Jim McFadden has acted and continues to act.

I have no doubt that it is still true that Jim McFadden continues to act. In celestial ways that are beyond our present ken. But also, perhaps, in ways terrestrial, for since he took off with the angels *catholic eye* and the *Human Life Review* continue to appear and, for the life of me, they bear the mark of the indomitable faith and wicked wit that I would recognize anywhere as the handiwork of Jim McFadden. (For subscription information on either or both, write The Human Life Foundation, 215 Lexington Avenue, 4th floor, New York, NY 10016.) J. P. McFadden. *Requiescat in pace*.

FT

WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ During the Pope's visit to St. Louis in January, I was doing television commentary for NBC and so had an advance text of his homily at the huge Mass for 110,000 in the Dome (with another 40,000 in an annex). I had underlined what I took to be, so to speak, the three hot lines: "As the family goes, so goes the nation"; a fervent appeal that we be "unconditionally pro-life"; and a rejection of the death penalty as "cruel and unnecessary." The first two received an explosively enthusiastic response, and I wondered, knowing where most people are on capital punishment, whether that would be the case with the third. The decibel reading was not quite as high, but the response was undoubtedly enthusiastic. The death penalty passage was immediately and pointedly followed by the statement that we need to recover a sense of "the Church as Mother and Teacher." There is no doubt that the teaching of this pontificate has ratcheted up the Church's opposition to capital punishment as incompatible with "the culture of life." The polls say that the general public, Catholics not excepted, is overwhelmingly supportive of the death penalty, but Edward Gaffney of Valparaiso Law School, reviewing a new book on the subject (*The Death Penalty in America*, edited by Hugo Adam Bedau,

Oxford University Press), prescribes a grain of salt: "One of the essays in the Bedau volume shows how 'little is known about what the American public really thinks of capital punishment.' As long as pollsters only ask for a 'Yes' or 'No' reply to the question 'Do you favor the death penalty?' a strong majority indicates support. But this support may be a mile wide and an inch deep. For example, both polling data and jury behavior show that Americans differentiate among kinds of killings, with much greater willingness to apply the ultimate sanction to a serial murderer, say, than to a battered wife who reaches in desperation for a knife to kill an abusive husband. And a 1991 Gallup Poll showed a marked falloff in support for the death penalty if the public is told of a more effective and far less costly alternative, life without parole. Another study by William Bowers cited in the Bedau volume shows that support for the death penalty plummets still further when a requirement is added that a murderer work in prison industries for money that would go to the families of their victims. Politicians who prey on our fear of violence should not try to fool most of us most of the time with tough talk on the death penalty. Killing killers will not give us the security from violence we all seek."

■ Herewith the headline of a news release that did not invite careful reading: "Teenagers Are Focused on the Future: Barna Research Study Reveals Millions of Teenagers Think About the Future on a Daily Basis." All of them, I should have supposed. It's what you do when you don't have much of a past.

■ The Russian Orthodox Church has announced that it is suspending its involvement in the World Council of Churches until the work of a joint commission between the church and council reports, which may be at least three years. The Russian and other Orthodox churches have long been unhappy with what they view as the liberal theological and moral trends in the dominantly Protestant WCC. In fact, without the Orthodox, the WCC is only tenuously ecumenical. Some conservative critics of the WCC in the West are pleased to have what they take to be the support of the Orthodox, but things are a bit more squiggly than that. The Orthodox turn against the WCC is in largest part, according to informed observers, a xenophobic turn against the West in general. The Russian Orthodox leadership is riddled with the abiding corruption of KGB bishops who, in a bitter twist, were ecumenical agents of the Soviet regime, but at least in some instances became sincere advocates of Christian unity and an opening to the West. This convoluted circumstance may lead one to view the Russian withdrawal from the WCC with deepest ambivalence. All this, not incidentally, has put a damper on John Paul II's hope for a reconciliation in which, as he puts it, the Church may again

“breathe with both lungs,” the East and the West. The failure of the effort to bring about such a reconciliation is certainly the greatest single disappointment of this pontificate. At the same time, the appeal and principles set forth in *Ut Unum Sint* (That They May Be One) by John Paul II have laid the groundwork for the realization of that hope in the future. Another factor, of course, in the resurgence of Slavic xenophobia is the U.S.-NATO support for the Muslim side in the Serbian war.

■ Under the title “Not the Usual Suspects,” *Policy Review* collects some quotes on school vouchers from unusual sources. For instance, Arthur Levine, President of Columbia University Teachers College: “Throughout my career, I have been an opponent of school voucher programs. . . . However, after much soul-searching, I have reluctantly concluded that a limited school voucher program is now essential for the poorest Americans attending the worst public schools. . . . Today, to force children into inadequate schools is to deny them any chance of success. To do so simply on the basis of their parents’ income is a sin” (*Wall Street Journal*, June 15, 1998). And, of all people, Laurence Tribe of Harvard Law School: “Any objection that anyone would have to a voucher program would have to be policy-based and could not rest on legal doctrine. One would have to be awfully clumsy to write voucher legislation that could not pass constitutional scrutiny. . . . Aid to parents . . . would be constitutional” (*New York Times*, June 12, 1991). Then there is Brent Staples of the *New York Times* editorial board: “Democrats who had made careers as champions of the poor opposed the [school choice] plan, arguing that a solution that did not save every child was unacceptable. The Democrats got the worst of the exchange. They seemed more interested in preserving the public school monopoly than in saving at least some children’s lives [through vouchers]” (*New York Times*, January 4, 1998). Would you believe U.S. Senator John Kerry? He said: “Shame on us for not realizing that there are parents in this country who . . . today support vouchers not because they are enamored with private schools but because they want a choice for their children. They want alternatives, and seeing none in our rigid system, they are willing and some even desperate to look elsewhere” (speech at Northeastern University, June 16, 1998). Finally, columnist William Raspberry: “If I find myself slowly morphing into a supporter of charter schools and vouchers, it isn’t because I harbor any illusions that there’s something magical about these alternatives. It is because I am increasingly doubtful that the public schools can do (or at any rate will do) what is necessary to educate poor minority children” (*Washington Post*, June 26, 1998). It’s enough to make even the most hardened

conservative wonder if invincible ignorance may be on the wane.

■ The Illinois Bar Association, like others, has a committee that is supposed to evaluate the character and fitness of those who want to be admitted to law. This is usually a pro forma thing, as witness the character of the bar. But somewhere a line must be drawn, and Illinois drew it by not approving Matthew Hale, head of what he calls the World Church of the Creator and self-described racist and anti-Semite, who uses the Israeli flag as a doormat, decorates his walls with swastikas, and declares that Hitler had the right idea, except he should have promoted the supremacy of all whites, not just Germans. His professed reason for wanting to be a lawyer is to advocate such views, which, said the Illinois panel, are blatantly immoral and render him unfit to be a lawyer. “Under any civilized standards of decency, the incitement of racial hatred for the ultimate purpose of depriving selected groups of their legal rights shows a gross deficiency in moral character, particularly for lawyers who have a special responsibility to uphold the rule of law for all persons,” the panel said. Never mind that it may seem a little late in the day to be setting moral standards for lawyers, and never mind that there is a double standard at work in that I doubt if any bar association has refused admission to someone advocating the hateful doctrines of, say, Mao or Stalin. Never mind those and other possible objections; the Illinois panel is right. But, as is to be expected, moral libertarians, including Harvard’s ubiquitous Alan Dershowitz, are screaming violation of Mr. Hale’s rights to free speech. Hale’s free speech is not the question. The question is a profession’s right to maintain at least the appearance of maintaining a moral standard, however minimal. As reflected in, *inter alia*, his passionate advocacy on behalf of O. J. Simpson and Bill Clinton, Mr. Dershowitz is a man without scruples, who seems to think the Constitution prohibits all moral judgments but his own. In a typically smarmy aside he says that, if he takes the case, he will have a black co-counsel and contribute his fees to anti-racist groups. The Anti-Defamation League is also opposed to the decision of the bar association, warning about a “slippery slope” that could penalize people with unpopular opinions on issues such as abortion and school prayer. That is touching, in view of the ADL’s record of being ever so solicitous about the rights of anti-abortion and school prayer advocates. The panel of the Illinois bar has explained its decision with admirable lucidity, and should stand by it.

■ It may surprise some readers, but I’m regularly asked, “Just who are these evangelical Protestants anyway?” Of course evangelicals themselves have written heavy tomes in response to that question. I frequently refer inquirers to *Christianity Today*, the

mainline publication of the anti-mainline Protestantism that is a defining characteristic of evangelicalism. Yes, it is confusing. Of course there are defining characteristics, such as biblical authority, the accent on conversion experience, and commitment to the missionary imperative. But evangelicalism is very importantly evangelicaldom, a world of maddeningly various spiritual entrepreneurship. The issue of *CT* at hand, for instance, is 136 pages, no less than seventy of them being full-page advertisements (plus many smaller ads) plugging spiritual uplift, educational opportunities, and sundry products in support of Christian living. It is the American Mall of laissez-faire religion. Evangelicalism is driven less by denominational leadership than by what are called para-church organizations (Campus Crusade, InterVarsity, World Vision, Prison Fellowship, and on and on), typically built around the charism of their founders. Among the many kingdoms within evangelicaldom, Christianity Today Inc. is by no means the least. While on the subject, let me answer a Baptist reader who asks why we don't usually capitalize the word evangelical. The simple answer is that we usually try to follow the usage preferred by the community in question, and most evangelicals don't capitalize the word. I have, however, noticed in the last few years, usually in connection with discussions of "Evangelicals and Catholics Together," that some evangelicals do use the upper case, probably for reasons of symmetry with "Catholic." I expect that for most evangelicals upper case Evangelical might have ecclesiological intimations that do not sit well with their doctrine of the church. On the upper case question, we'll await further developments, and probably follow the lead of *CT*. As observant readers know, our policy is always to stick with the mainline.

■ I earlier mentioned that big national survey commissioned by the Center for Gender Equality. Faye Wattleton, longtime director of Planned Parenthood, thinks the findings are "complex and disturbing," as well she might. The survey on "religiopolitics" (their term) was intended to examine the "impact of conservative religious political activism on women's attitudes about their equality and their role in society." It turns out that women love religion, with three-quarters rating it as "very important" in their lives. The gender benders regretfully report that, "Overall, women think that religious organizations have a positive impact on American life and would like them to be more involved in the public debate. . . . They believe that religious organizations are not a threat to their own interests or to the interests of women in general." And the news gets worse. "Does your involvement with your religious organization make you feel that to be a good wife you must allow your husband to

make decisions for the family?" Sixty-six percent of women say no. "Does it make you feel uncomfortable about your political beliefs?" "About your sexuality?" Eighty-eight percent say no to both. So much for consciousness raising. Incidentally, more than twice as many women think the Christian Coalition serves the interests of women as think it is a threat. Most devastating to the research sponsors, however, is the finding that fully 70 percent of women favor restrictions on abortion, with 40 percent wanting to ban it altogether or making exceptions only for rape, incest, or direct threat to the mother's life. On Ms. Wattleton's thinking the findings are "complex," the *Weekly Standard* editors remark: "Of course, almost any faithful sounding of real people's views is bound to seem dizzyingly complex if the only fixed point of your mental universe is that a woman's dignity depends on her absolute, unhindered right to abort her pregnancies."

■ Funny how one remembers things. I have a very distinct memory of the installation of Archbishop Spyridon as head of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in the United States in the fall of 1996 because I had gone to Kennedy Airport to meet Edward Cardinal Cassidy of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, and we got stuck in traffic behind the police-escorted caravan carrying Spyridon into the city. But the delay was time well used in discussing relations with the Orthodox, and with the Greeks in particular. There were then high hopes that Spyridon, who followed the long rule of Iakovos, would provide a fresh vision, leading a more confident community of 1.5 million into the third millennium. Things seem to have gone downhill since then. First there was a big flap over Spyridon's intervention to reorganize the administration and faculty of Holy Cross seminary in Brookline, Massachusetts; then he marginalized some of the more respected leaders in church headquarters, including Fr. Robert Stephanopoulos (father of George, the former Clinton adviser); then he reacted in a way that was thought to be ham-fisted when groups of laity insisted upon more adequate financial accountability. Finally, the five American metropolitans, or senior bishops, concluded that Spyridon had to go. They wrote Patriarch Bartholomew in Constantinople, who had appointed Spyridon and has jurisdiction over the American archdiocese: "The archdiocese is presently suffocating in an atmosphere of fear, suspicion, insecurity, lack of trust, and vindictiveness. The majority of the clergy and laity have lost their trust in their ecclesiastical leadership, which during the last two and a half years has not been able to create and promote new visions and new dreams for the future." Bartholomew responded that he had appointed Spyridon and Spyridon would stay; the

Americans would just have to get used to it and learn to cooperate. So that is where things stand at the moment. As with much of Orthodoxy in this country, the question pressed is whether these churches are religio-ethnic tribes in exile from their home countries or ecclesial communities in America that are part of the Orthodox Church. Underlying that question is whether Orthodoxy has any way of giving institutional expression to the idea of the universal Church. The great Orthodox theologian and my dear friend, the late Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, said the only way for that to happen would be through a pan-Orthodox council. To which he would add with a smile, "But you must understand that a pan-Orthodox council is an eschatological concept." Meanwhile, it appears that the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese under the leadership of Spyridon will limp across the threshold of the third millennium with the hopes of that bright fall day of 1996 being no more than a memory.

■ In the United Kingdom, a new Methodist Book of Worship has just appeared. Included is prayer addressed to "God our Father and Mother." Excluded is the "prayer of humble access" at Holy Communion, which begins, "We do not presume to come to this your table, merciful Lord." The liturgical committee thought the prayer was too "grovelly." Said the Rev. Norman Wallwork, speaking for the committee, "An overriding element of the Eucharist is to be lifted up by the healing of God. We do not want people to be brought down at this holy moment and reminded they are a sinner." Maybe he is making a point about the collective nature of sin, or maybe his grammar is as muddled as his theology.

■ So Elia Kazan finally got his Oscar for lifetime achievement, and it's more than about time. The director of such great films as *On the Waterfront* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Kazan was blacklisted by Hollywood because in 1952 he testified to Congress against eight associates who were members of the Communist Party. Then and now he publicly defends his action. The former Communists and their friends organized a protest at the awards ceremony. The *Times* editorially comments that "the protest is certainly merited, but so is the award. . . . The Academy has done what it has not always been able to do—distinguish clearly between the merit of an artist's work and the merit of his behavior or convictions." Thus, even at this late date, the editors put themselves on the side of those who claim that members of the CPUSA were innocent victims of "McCarthyism." The outrageous behavior of the junior Senator from Wisconsin notwithstanding, there is now no excuse for not knowing that the CPUSA was not an innocent band of "liberals in a hurry" but a totally controlled instrument of the

Soviet Union devoted to the destruction of our constitutional order and the victory of our totalitarian adversary. The most recent and damning documentation of this is *The Haunted Wood* by Allen Weinstein and Alexander Vassiliev (see FT, May), but the evidence has been available for a very long time. In 1952, Congress and Elia Kazan were in the honorable business of attempting to expose those who were traitors to their country. That's the fact. The business was marked by messiness and mendacity because politics is almost always marked by messiness and mendacity, and, in this instance, because witting agents and dupes of the conspiracy systematically lied about that aforementioned fact, as many continue to do even today. Elia Kazan is accused of "snitching on his friends." He says he was serving his country. Still today many subscribe to the infamous assertion of E. M. Forster that, if he had to choose between betraying his country and betraying his friends, he hoped he would have the guts to betray his country. Forgotten is the reality that one is betraying one's friends by betraying one's country. Forgotten, too, is the fact that those who are the friends of tyrants and mass murderers should not be counted as friends. One would like to think that those who approved the award to Mr. Kazan understand these matters better than the organizers of the protest, and better than the editors of the *Times*.

■ The editors of *Christianity Today* get part of it right when they say, "There is a momentum to the pro-life cause. We are winning the battle of persuasion in the minds of many Americans—a necessary first step if we are to become a truly pro-life nation. At the same time, further clinic protests are not the best way to persuade the unpersuaded or to mobilize the convinced but inactive." But they are wrong to be so impressed with Alan Wolfe's report *One Nation After All*. Sociologist Wolfe had research assistants interview 200 middle-class suburbanites and came up with the unsurprising discovery that people do not like to appear "judgmental." The *CT* editors assert, "What persuades in a social order based on the plebiscite of instant polling is the positive image: The image of caring, of compassion, of empathy, of service." What does instant polling have to do with persuasion? Is the point to win polling numbers? "Clinic protests," the editors continue, "too easily lend themselves to images of judgmentalism, anger, and hostility (if not actual violence)—precisely the images that turn off the subjects of Wolfe's study." True, but killing babies is something of a turn-off. One might observe that the editors of *CT* too easily lend themselves to the stereotypes employed by pro-abortionists, which is certainly not what they want to do. There are many ways to be pro-life, and this journal has given sustained attention to the research,

strategies, and arguments that might advance that cause. But the fact is that, for more than twenty-five years, there have been thousands of people who have stood vigil at America's abortuaries; who have prayed, counseled, and sometimes gone to jail, in order to prevent the rest of us from averting our eyes from the horror. It is not the only way of being pro-life or even of being a pro-life activist, but they are heroes and heroines, and we are all in their debt. Catering to the refined sensibilities of the assiduously nonjudgmental may at times have its place, but it is really not very helpful to tell people who have been seized by a vision of the horror that they ought to accentuate the positive.

■ Criticism of Muslim complicity with terrorism is now coming from the inside, specifically from the Islamic Supreme Council, a Muslim education group in Washington, D.C. The Council stated in a recent issue of the ISC's magazine, *The Muslim*, that "too often we see leaders of the community equivocating between implicit support for extremists and general condemnations of terrorism." The Council suggests that Muslim groups in the U.S. should "openly disclose their ties to foreign groups and movements, as well as the nature of these associations." No guilty parties were identified by the Council, however, because, according to the editor Mateen Siddiqui, "these groups should engage in self-disclosure." Also, as he did not say, some of these groups play rough.

■ If, as the current liberal line has it, conservatives are neo-Puritans, the Rev. Jerry Falwell is the witch-burning, gay-bashing genuine article without the prefix. Remember the media flurry over his allegedly having "outed" a cartoon character in a popular television show? Says the Rev. Falwell, "I have never watched the Teletubbies on television. Until the recent media explosion accusing me of 'outing' Tinky Winky as being gay, I had never heard of this sweet-looking character. I certainly never criticized Tinky Winky in any way." So what happened? A magazine of which Falwell is the publisher quoted, accurately, statements by *Time* and *People* magazines, as well as the *Washington Post*, saying that Tinky Winky is a gay figure and represents the cultural mainlining of homosexuality. The same publications, plus many others, then had a journalistic picnic ridiculing the Rev. Falwell for saying that Tinky Winky is a gay figure representing the cultural mainlining of homosexuality, which of course he did not say. The charitable interpretation is that the editors of *Time*, *People*, the *Washington Post*, et al. do not read their own publications, for which they may be readily forgiven. The reality is that, when it comes to bashing conservative Christians, the facts don't matter. But then, you probably already knew that.

■ Among the many fine books written by and about this great Pope, we are especially pleased to recommend *A Celebration of the Thought of John Paul II* (\$19.95), edited by Gregory R. Beabout of St. Louis University and issuing from a conference marking the Pope's January visit to that city. The collected essays discuss John Paul's thought on theology, philosophy, culture, the Gospel of Life, non-Catholics, the family, economics, communism, and faith and reason, and are written by such estimable persons as Avery Dulles, George Weigel, and Janet Smith, with comments by Karol Wojtyla himself. To order, please call Carol Murphy at St. Louis University Press, (312) 977-2244 or fax (314) 977-3943.

■ If India is abandoning its constitutional secularism in favor of rabid nationalism, writes Jon Stock in the *Spectator*, then it's with good reason. That good reason is the "extreme intolerance of the evangelical, mostly American missionaries who are now working in India." Stock lists some of these missionaries' egregious activities: treating leprosy, training and supporting indigenous pastors, channeling funds and resources to India, and, worse yet, praying. Indeed, that the missionaries pray that local animism and Hinduism will give way to Christianity is, to Stock, intolerably intolerant. As far as he is concerned, that explains why Hindu nationalists react with excessive violence, for instance in the case of the Australian missionary and his sons who were burned alive in their jeep. One may infer that Stock believes these missionaries get exactly what they deserve. More likely, he cannot resist an occasion to condescend to the vulgar American cousins. When the Raj was in place, India was ever so effectively evangelized by the more proper Church of England.

■ "The Abortion Horizon Today," an editorial in the Jesuit weekly *America*, might better be titled "Lowering the Horizon." After agreeing with George W. Bush that the country is not yet ready for the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, the editors write: "Finally, believers in the Gospel of Life must be no more discouraged in seeking to diminish abortions than Martin Luther King, Jr. was in seeking civil rights for African Americans." Dr. King did not seek to diminish segregation but to end segregation. The goal of the pro-life movement remains: Every unborn child protected in law and welcomed in life. Fortunately, Gov. Bush says he is committed to that goal—even if the editors of *America* are not so sure.

■ Dr. Jack Kevorkian has, at long last, been convicted of murder. The killing of Thomas Youk, which was the snuff film broadcast by *60 Minutes* to boost its ratings, left the jury no choice but to convict. Taking, as the saying has it, a fool for his client, Kevorkian, who boasted of helping more than

130 people to commit suicide, conducted his own defense. Vehemently chopping one hand into the palm of the other, he told the jury that the killing of Youk was intended "to end his torture finally and definitively." "You don't want to put him to sleep and have him reawake in the same condition he was before. That wasn't the aim. The aim was a final solution to incurable agony." Final solution.

Endlösung, anyone? Yes of course, one must be very careful in drawing analogies with the Holocaust. But the Kevorkian logic is comparable, right down to his advocacy of using prisoners on death row for medical experiments. They're going to die anyway, aren't they? Perhaps wisely, the Michigan prosecutor steered clear of philosophical or moral arguments about mercy killing. He stuck to the simple point that Jack Kevorkian was not legally authorized to kill people and, if he did, he is guilty of murder. It was, if you will, a positivist argument: the law is the law is the law. It was not a morally or philosophically satisfying argument, but thank God it is the law. The moral, philosophical, and political task is to make sure that it continues to be the law.

■ Erik v. Kuehnelt-Leddihn, the Austrian polymath who turns ninety this summer and has lived more history than most people have read, will be making his umpteenth lecture tour in the U.S. this October. A very orthodox Catholic who thinks Luther was a theological genius, and a great fan of the social teaching of John Paul II who thinks democracy is the handiwork of the Devil, Dr. Kuehnelt-Leddihn will not bore your audience. You can contact him to make a date at A-6072, Lans, Tyrol, Austria.

■ Enough already. We have called attention to the Israeli government's unprecedented intervention in calling upon the Vatican not to proceed with the possible beatification of Pope Pius XII, and to Edgar Bronfman's World Jewish Congress with its strident attacks on the Catholic Church. These are among the developments pertinent to a paper by Edward Cardinal Cassidy, president of the Church's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, prepared for a Baltimore meeting sponsored by the American Jewish Committee and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Cardinal Cassidy praised the great progress made in Jewish-Catholic relations over the past three decades, and suggested the time had now come to move the focus away from inter-group problems to the religious and spiritual truths that bind these communities together under the one God of Israel. He then offered these candid and cautionary words: "For the Catholic Church, the program of study and action that I have set out is one to which we are deeply committed. I believe that the great majority of our members support these efforts, if not by positive involvement, at least by silent approval. But now I must sound a signal of alarm. I have to admit before this prestigious

gathering that I am becoming concerned that some of the good work that has been done is under threat. The reaction within the Catholic community to recent aggressive attitudes manifested in our regard by certain Jewish agencies is the cause of this concern. Catholics who for many years have been engaged in promoting Jewish-Catholic relations have come to me to express their dismay at what is happening and their loss of interest in continuing along this chosen and, I believe, blessed path. Nor can I say in conscience that their reaction is unwarranted. Our partner in dialogue for so many years, the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultation, is no longer in existence. One of its largest members is involved in a systematic campaign to denigrate the Catholic Church. Jewish responses to what we seek to do to improve our relationship are often so negative that some now hesitate to do anything at all for fear of making the situation worse. Our suggestion last year that Jewish and Catholic scholars study together the material from our archives already made available to the public has been completely ignored. Moreover, recent Jewish attempts to influence decisions concerning the internal life of the Catholic Church are strongly resented. Persons very dear to the Catholic faithful are condemned without proof, but simply because they are not *personae gratae* with the Jewish community. These are not pleasing facts to mention, and yet we cannot speak about a new agenda and take no note of the uncertain atmosphere that is beginning to cloud over our present relationship." Cardinal Cassidy expressed the hope that the atmosphere can be cleared by a return to sincere dialogue and genuine respect for one another.

■ Theology 101, according to the editors of the *New York Times*. The lead on Easter Sunday was titled "A Season of Sacrifice" and discussed the convergence of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim holy days. Passover, which gets the most space, is described as celebrating "the emergence of the Jewish people, but its universal drama is that of an escape from oppression, a declaration of freedom and self-determination that remains at issue 3,500 years after it was first heard." Universal self-determination? So it turns out that it is Moses and not Woodrow Wilson to whom we owe that blood-drenched idea. Easter, on the other hand, "is about a promise of salvation after defeat that is of a deeply personal nature, rather than the emergence of a people." So much for the Church. Easter, we are told, "celebrates one man maintaining his faithfulness before the military might of an oppressive government and the taunts of the crowd, a lesson of integrity and determination that has molded much of civilization as we know it." So much for the Resurrection. Then this: "The Muslim holiday of Id al-Adha may be less familiar to

most Americans." Really? The "may be" is a nice touch. The editors do not say so, but they seem to be aware that the reason for the possible lack of familiarity may have something to do with there being a lot more Christians than Muslims in the U.S. In any event, and the evil Mr. Milosevic notwithstanding, all three religions enshrine a "genuine tradition of tolerance," and the convergence of the holidays is "a powerful reminder of that higher yearning among peoples of all traditions." In sum, the message of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam is that we should all be good liberals. It has taken a long time, but Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad presumably should be pleased that they have, at long last, been so clearly understood.

■ I'm afraid that Richard Alleva's sense of perspective fails him when in "Nothing to Laugh About" he scorns the Robert Benigni movie *Life is Beautiful*. Of course the Holocaust is nothing to laugh about, but joyful laughter is fully warranted over the human capacity to construct and live a narrative that sustains us through all that is hellish in life, and that capacity is what the movie is about. Writing in *Commonweal*, Alleva says, "It muffles horror, even aestheticizes it. Just as Guido [the main character] transforms the horror of the camp into fun-and-games for the sake of his child's mental health, so does Benigni tame horror for the sake of the viewer's mental comfort. But what is heroic in the father is craven in the filmmaker." That, I believe, misses the point. I am not much of a moviegoer these days, but was moved to see *Life is Beautiful* shortly after it opened when I learned that

the Pope thought it quite wonderful. I don't want to over-theologize the film, but it is powerfully suggestive of J. R. R. Tolkien's insight that so influenced C. S. Lewis, namely, that Christianity is the *true* myth. The father's myth of a game that sustains his young son through the horror of the concentration camp is analogous to the Christian claim that life is a testing which, faithfully and daringly lived, leads to victory and final reconciliation with the Good. (In the film that is the boy's final reconciliation with his mother.) All right, so that may be reading too much into it—or out of it, as the case may be. But surely the countless people who see this film will leave the theater thinking, "Despite everything, dammit, life is beautiful." You might almost say, at the risk of adverting to another horror, that it is a pro-life movie.

■ Here's an invitation from the Philadelphia Society, a venerable conservative institution, announcing its annual meeting. "The topic is 'Will Western Civilization Survive the 21st Century?' We expect to have stimulating discussions and to arrive at a definitive answer." Stimulating discussions, I have no doubt, but for a definitive answer I think I'll wait for the annual meeting of 2099.

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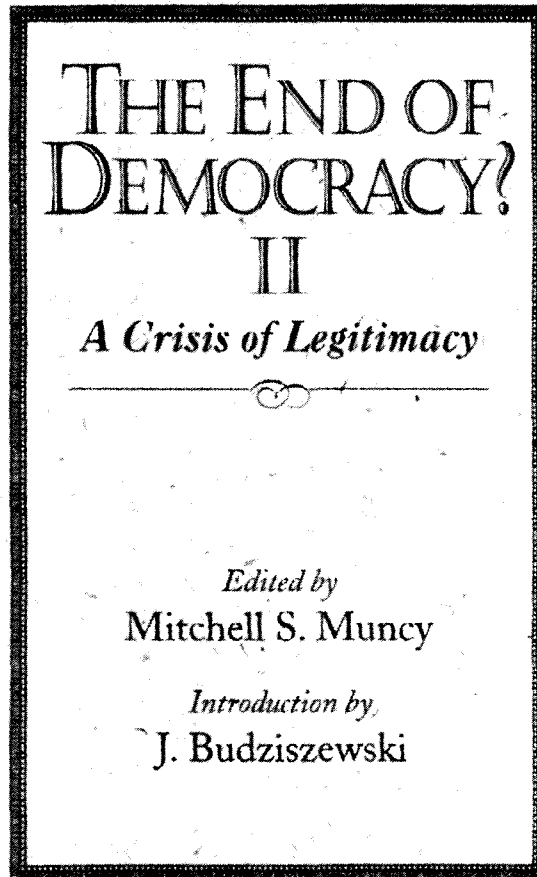
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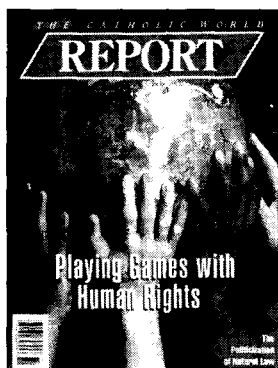
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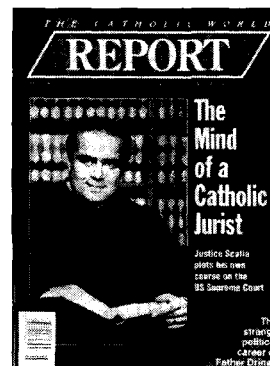
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